



The Holy See

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 31 December 2017*

Multimedia

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

On this first Sunday after Christmas, we are celebrating the Holy Family of Nazareth, and the Gospel invites us to reflect on the experience lived by Mary, Joseph and Jesus, as they grow together as a family in mutual love and in trust in God. The rite performed by Mary and Joseph, in offering their son Jesus to God, is an expression of this trust. The Gospel states: “they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” (Lk 2:22) as Mosaic Law required. Jesus’ parents go to the Temple to attest that their son belongs to God and that they are the guardians of his life, and not the owners. And this leads us to reflect. All parents are guardians of their children’s lives, not the owners, and they must help them to grow, to mature.

This gesture emphasizes that God alone is the Lord of individual and family history; everything comes to us from him. Each family is called to acknowledge this primacy, by protecting and educating children to open themselves to God who is the very source of life. From here passes the secret of inner youth, paradoxically witnessed to in the Gospel by an elderly couple, Simeon and Anna. The elderly Simeon, in particular, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says in regard to the Child Jesus: “this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against [...] that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed” (vv. 34-35).

These prophetic words reveal that Jesus has come to tear down the false images that we make of

God and also of ourselves; to “speak against” the worldly certainties on which we insistently rely; to make ourselves “rise” to a true human and Christian journey, founded on the values of the Gospel. There is no family situation that is precluded from this new journey of rebirth and resurrection. Each time that families — even those that are wounded and marked by frailty, failures and difficulties — return to the source of the Christian experience, new roads and unexpected opportunities open.

Today’s Gospel narrative recounts that when Mary and Joseph “had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew” — the Gospel says — “and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him” (vv. 39-40). Children’s growth is a great joy for the family, we all know it. They are destined to grow and become strong, to acquire knowledge and receive the grace of God, just as happened to Jesus. He is truly one of us: the Son of God becomes a child, agrees to grow, to become strong; he is filled with knowledge, and the grace of God is upon him. Mary and Joseph have the joy of seeing all this in their son; and this is the mission to which the family is directed: to create conditions favourable to the harmonious and full growth of its children, so they may live a good life, worthy of God and constructive for the world.

This is the wish that I offer all the families today, with the accompanying invocation to Mary, Queen of the Family.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, I express my closeness to the Coptic Orthodox brothers and sisters of Egypt, struck two days ago by two attacks on a Church and on a shop in the periphery of Cairo. May the Lord welcome the souls of the departed, strengthen the wounded, their family members and the entire community, and convert the hearts of the violent.

Today I address a special greeting to the families present here, and also to those participating at home. May the Holy Family bless you and guide you on your journey.

I greet all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims; in particular, parish groups, associations and young people. Let us not forget on this day to thank God for the past year and for every good received. And it will do us good, each one of us, to take a little time to think about how many good things we have received from the Lord this year, and to give thanks. And if there were trials, difficulties, also give thanks because he helped us to overcome those moments. Today is a day of thanksgiving.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday and a peaceful year’s end. I thank you again for your wishes and your prayers: please continue to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*

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