

Holy Family 2009

Luke 2:41-52

We fittingly celebrate the Holy Family
that results from the birth in the flesh of the all-holy One.

In other words,

we are invited by the Church to take a second look at the Nativity.

Now, this is *not* your typical family

- the mother, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and remains a virgin
- the father initially decides to bow out of this complexity, but, after the angel's "command", adopts the son not biologically his own
- a son who is God

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus: this is not your *typical* family.

Does their a-typicality, however, make them un-real?

Indeed, we often envision a blissful, almost plastic, trio.

We often envision in caricature terms.

- Mary is the quasi-nun who has no clue what real people deal with
- Joseph is the stoic (and, might I add, boring) silent type
- Jesus is, well, God, and thus not your average kid

We envision something frankly disconnected and thus *irrelevant*.

On a good day, we *perhaps* think, "**If only we could be like them**"

I hear you.

And I can hear some of you mothers:

"Let me tell you about *real* family life! My kid is not God.

And my husband is definitely not Saint Joseph!"

Allow me to declare that, despite unusual circumstances,

and a unique link with the Divine, they are *real*.

The questions are:

- What is it to be a family?
- What is it to be "like them"?

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus are real because love is what makes a family.

The love ties, more than the biological ties, form family

—which is why adoptive parents are *real* parents.

It is true that God is at the origin of this family in a unique way.

But, both Mary and Joseph, in circumstances that were chosen for them,

chose and loved and educated a child, their child: Jesus.
And they chose always to go further in love.
This is what this unusual incident reveals.
Jesus is age twelve and, according to Jewish custom,
they go to Temple for the feast of Passover.
And, lo and behold, one thing very typical of families occurs.
After leaving, they cannot find the boy!
What is less typical is the exchange that is had upon finding him.
Jesus' response is almost startling:
**“Why were you looking for me?
Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”**
Is this Jesus, the most sensitive man ever to walk the face of the earth,
speaking?
It is indeed.
It is a *revelation*—which, initially, goes right over his parents' heads.
Jesus reveals something of his divinity to them.
The three days of separation is very deliberate
—like the three days in the tomb.
The three days prepare and precede revelation.

What is also quite amazing is the response of Mary and Joseph.
They do not understand but welcome.
“Mary kept all these things in her heart”.
Such is love.
If we await complete understanding before we love, we will never love.
Mary and Joseph continue to exercise their responsibility as parents,
all the while accepting to be led by their son to greater heights.

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus are a holy family.
A holy family is a family moved and transformed by divine love.
Holy family does not mean a humanly perfect family.
This holy family lived everything lived in love, including trial and pain.

In this, according to the reality of love, the Holy Family is a model,
model of any household, any community.
When we say model in this case, however, because we are speaking of love,
we are not speaking of behavioural guidelines.
We are speaking of an active, loving presence.
Mary, Joseph, and Jesus are present, actively assisting us—if we so desire—
to open to the mystery of God—in all things, at all times, particularly in trial,

and to give ourselves unreservedly in love.

A few simple questions arise:

- Are we open to their presence?
- Do we, as a family, in our relationships, really bring our problems to God?
- Do we really pray as a family, a household, a couple, a community?

It is not always easy to pray together, for the vulnerability it entails is acute.

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus know this.

Such vulnerability is fine.

Love always entails vulnerability

Let us accept to be vulnerable in love, and our hearts will expand.

We will be at home with the Holy Family, and filled with their joy.
