

## HOMILY HOLY FAMILY YRB 2017

I was reading some information from the U.S. Census Bureau. The average family in the U.S. is 2.58 people. Families are getting smaller. 7 million people live in a state other than the one they lived in the year before. People are moving around more. 40 million people in the U.S. were not born here, which makes it likely that they are separated from extended family. 31 million people in the U.S. live alone. Today as we celebrate the Holy Family, I think we need to be mindful that our families are very important and we probably need to work harder today to maintain our family contacts.

What do we learn about the Holy Family from the reading today. We find out that they were faith filled Jews and observed the Jewish law. We learn that they lived in Nazareth, which was a small ordinary town not known for anything. When Simeon and Anna identified Jesus as the Messiah, Mary and Joseph were amazed, this indicates that Jesus was not acting like the Messiah, but rather like a normal kid. And we also learned that Jesus grew and became strong and filled with wisdom. Jesus chose to prepare for his public ministry in a poor family in a little town with faith filled parents. He chose not to have a life of privilege. Scripture scholars tell us that we hear little about Jesus childhood in the Gospels because nothing extraordinary happened during this time. Jesus had a normal childhood.

I think what we learn about our families is that the most important thing is that we spend ordinary time with them. It is not about the material possession, the privileges, the vacations. These are nice but secondary to the ordinary time we spend together. Children learn about their faith and morals and values within the family. We can help with religious education, and the schools can help, but if that does not happen in the family, it is not going to happen. And the more separated we are from extended family; the more responsibility falls on parents. And this teaching comes during ordinary time spent together being really present to each other. Dinner

time was an important time for me and I think for my generation growing up. The TV was not on and the telephone did not get answered. We connected with one another for this hour every day. I read that 2/3 of families do not eat meals together and of the 1/3 that does, 50% of them are watching television. Things are different today. Maybe it is not possible to have meals together, but I am going to suggest if that is true for you, you need to spend some ordinary time together. While this is extremely important for children, it is important for all of us. Your family will keep you on track. Your family is likely to call you on it if you get off track. I was talking to my sister about that this week. We need to make more of an effort to spend ordinary time together.

And for those of us who are separated from family, friends can become family. I have some very close friends that are really important to me since I live alone. In the Gospel reading Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. They were also declaring their connection to a faith family. We do the same thing when we bring our children to church to be baptized. We are not just washing away original sin; we are declaring our intent to become part of a Catholic family. That is one of the advantages of being part of an organized religion. You also have a faith family. You have the opportunity to connect with people who are similarly situated and have similar values. Our faith families can meet some of the needs that used to be met by our biological families. Hopefully, if you want to be part of this family of faith you feel that you belong here. You can come as you are and join us in our faith journey.

Today, as we prepare to start a new year I am going to suggest that you pray about two things. First of all, do you need to be more connected to your biological family or close friends? If so, make a plan. Secondly, would it help you to become more connected with your faith family? If so, make a plan.