

PRAYER PROMPT

Devotion to the Holy Family

Families can take inspiration from the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The feast of the Presentation in the Temple on February 2 reflects their spiritual commitments. Each February, the Catholic Church invites us to grow in our devotion to the Holy Family.

3 Lessons from the Holy Family

St. Paul's VI's message at Nazareth, during his 1964 pilgrimage, stated: "...Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus—the school of the Gospel" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 533). Contemplating the Holy Family's life together, he suggested three lessons that we will take up here.

1. A lesson of silence. The Holy Family prayed many times a day as pious Jews following God and his Word. We, too, can pray at the start of the day, before bed or anytime. We can pray before meals and take part in the most nourishing prayer of all—the Mass—especially on Sundays. Praying a family Rosary is also a time-honored practice. It's Joyful Mysteries recall major events in the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Homelife ought to be a sanctuary from the clamor of life outside. Quiet times and silence for prayer strengthens the interior life of each person and the family's collective prayer. Prayer also grounds the religious education of each person. Vatican II declares: "The family is, so to speak, the domestic church" (*Lumen Gentium*, 11).

2. A lesson of family life. Beside prayer and piety, families foster growth in charity and virtue. Like the Holy Family, parents and children learn fidelity and service to one another through day-to-day living as well as through times of happiness, sorrow or crisis. St. John Paul II emphasized the important place of families "at the center of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love" (*Letter to Families*, 23).

Families are called to love, mercy and forgiveness as it is lived in both the sacrament of Matrimony and the moral life expressed in Scripture (i.e. Ten Commandments, Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount).

3. A lesson of work. Joseph was a carpenter, and Jesus was raised in the family trade. Mary cooked, served and kept the home as was the custom. Families today find themselves nobly engaged with work both inside and outside of the home for the sake of providing and protecting one another. An active life of loving service places the needs of others ahead of one's own happiness and diminishes selfishness.

Tips for Devotion to the Holy Family

Give your home a prayerful focal point: Select an icon, image or statue of the Holy Family for a place of honor in your home. Or keep the Christmas crèche up all year.

Celebrate liturgical feasts: Mark your calendar for the Presentation on February 2 and the feast of the Holy Family during the Christmas octave. Discover Marian feasts listed here: January 1, 8; February 11; March 25; May 13, 31; June 27; July 16; August 15, 22; September 8, 15; October 7; November 21; December 8, 10, 12. Or those dedicated to St. Joseph: March 19 and May 1.

Read the writings of recent popes on the family:

- Paul VI: Message at Nazareth, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, par. 533
- John Paul II: *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) and *Letter to Families* (1994)
- Benedict XVI: Message, "The Human Family, A Community of Peace," (January 1, 2008)
- Francis: *Amoris Laetitia* and speeches and homilies for the World Meeting of Families in Rome (June 2022) and the U.S. (September 2015)

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