

**Fr. Brad Neely**

**Holy Family Sunday: Year A**

**Spps, Nezperce: Dec 26, 2010**

**Sir 3: 2-6, 12-14; Col 3: 12-21; Mt 2: 13-15, 19-23**

I received an email forward this week that I think I had gotten before.

It was written by a mother, who, in 5 years of marriage, had not been blessed with children.

These are her words:

“I decided to do some serious praying and promised God that if he would give us a child, I would be a perfect mother, love it with all my heart and raise it with His word as my guide.”

Within the next four years, she and her husband were blessed with four children---3 sons and 1 daughter.

She continues:

“God had entrusted me with four children and I didn't want to disappoint Him.

I tried to be patient the day the children smashed two dozen eggs on the kitchen floor searching for baby chicks.

I tried to be understanding when they started a hotel for homeless frogs in the spare bedroom. . . .

When my daughter poured ketchup all over herself and rolled up in a blanket to see how it felt to be a hot dog, I tried to see the humor rather than the mess.

At the school Christmas play, [one of my sons] stepped forward wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, knelt at the manger and announced, ‘We are the three wise men, and we are bringing gifts of gold, common sense and fur.’ The [audience] dissolved into laughter, and the pageant got a standing ovation.

***My children are my pride and my joy and my greatest blessing," I said as I dug through my purse for an aspirin.***

In spite of changing over twenty-five thousand diapers, never eating a hot meal and never sleeping for more than thirty minutes at a time, I still thank God daily for my children.”

Today we celebrate **Holy Family Sunday**. Looking at the Holy Family today in Scripture, is to understand that they are a family ***in and of the world,***

**but also** a family formed by the divine hand.

When we look at ourselves and our own families,

we must keep the same thing in mind---families have, at the same time, an **earthly** and **divine** existence.

Were you thinking that ketchup and hot dogs were not originally created by God?

Within the Vatican II document,

**Guadium Et Spes**: “The Church in the Modern World,”

there is a section entitled,

“The Dignity of Marriage and the Family.”

"The well being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life."

"The intimate partnership of life. . . .

is rooted in the contract of. . .

their irrevocable personal consent.

It is an institution confirmed by the divine law and receiving its stability, even in the eyes of society,

from the human act by which the partners

mutually surrender themselves to each other;

for the good of the partners,

of the children, and of society. . (p47-48)

The family, then, is intimately connected with divine law.

St. Paul, in our reading from Colossians today, points out that we are

so intimately connected with divine life,

that it could be said that we are

to “wear” the attributes of holiness

in the world as if it were clothing:

***“Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,***

***bearing with one another and forgiving one another; if one has a grievance against another;***

*as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.  
And over all these **put on** love,  
that is, the bond of perfection.  
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,  
the peace into which you were also called in one body.  
And be thankful.  
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. . . .”*

So, it is natural to ask ourselves,  
"can the world see **within** our family unit,  
the attributes Paul mentions in Colossians---  
i.e. compassion, kindness, humility, etc?  
Do those around us **really** experience God  
through their contact with us  
in our Catholic family unit?  
Do **we** even **know** and understand God's presence  
within our own families?

The family, as time goes on,  
must continually meet the changes of the world,  
while, at the same time,  
remembering the truth  
that the it is divinely instituted.  
As the world changes,  
maintaining an identity of holiness  
seems to get trickier.

It doesn't take too much of our imagination  
to understand that the family  
meets a different world today.  
There are demands on our time.  
There are vastly greater amounts of stimuli,

enticing our attention away from the family---  
and directing it elsewhere.

Temptations abound,  
and they creep quietly into our consciousness,  
forming us without our awareness much of the time.

This is a time when families are in great **need**.  
We **need** to be reminded  
that the foundation of our family lives,  
and even life itself, again,  
has **divine origins** and **divine ends**---  
and **divinity** plays a role in the middle ground.

Families are an essential component of society,  
and require a great deal of care.

This is care that, *if in no other way*,  
must come with conscientious effort.

There is a lot to do,

to keep ourselves conscious  
of the fact that our earthly lives  
are constantly connected with divine life.

We are fortunate to honor the Holy Family today,  
for we can always look to their example.

It is a good spiritual exercise  
to contemplate how Mary and Joseph  
provided stewardship for their precious Son?

How did Joseph, Mary, and Jesus  
look after each other's well-being?

We can even throw into our contemplation,

“did Jesus ever set up a homeless shelter for frogs?”  
**stewardship for their precious Son?**