

The Holy Family: Model for Every Family on Earth

We see that at the beginning of the New Testament, as at the beginning of the Old, there is a married couple. Whereas Adam and Eve were the source of evil which was unleashed on the world, Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth. The Savior began the work of salvation by this virginal and holy union, wherein is manifested His all-powerful will to purify and sanctify the family—that sanctuary of love and cradle of life.

(Pope John Paul II, encyclical *Redemptor Custos*)

What a beautiful description of the family—a sanctuary of love and cradle of life. That beautiful sanctuary designed by a loving Creator was desecrated when the First Family in the order of nature, Adam and Eve, surrendered to the seduction and snares of the Fallen Angel and, in pride, wanting to be god, disobeyed God. Thus, they were driven out of that paradise of perfect harmony and intimacy with God into a world of darkness and separation from God, a world of discord with the earth and with one another. They lost for themselves, and us, the reward of obedient love, entrance into the Everlasting Paradise of the beatific vision and full communion with the unending glory of the Holy Triune God, the glory God intended for them and their posterity from the very beginning of time. In the fullness of

time, however, God kept His promise to send a Savior, the Sacred Humanity, who through His humility and obedience would reverse the deprivations of Adam and Eve's sin of pride and disobedience, and would engage us in a new covenant that would open the doors of the Father's house to us, and would adopt us into God's own family, through grace. All human history is measured by this sacred event, the Word-Made-Flesh in Jesus, the Sacred Humanity Who brings us salvation from all sin. As Jesus is the center of time and of the human family into which He was born, so must He be the center of every life called to be the extension of His humanity in our world. Christ's physical birth happened but once, but its purpose is to be reborn every day in every heart until we are so immersed in that Sacred Humanity it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. Thus, when we enter into the Father's house, He will look upon us and see only His Son and will call us by His Son's own Name, dearly Beloved of God. And we will respond, "Abba, Father!"

The feast of the Holy Family was established in 1893 by Pope Leo XIII to show the necessity and the importance of the unique and complete cooperation of this Family in the work of redemption, and to remind us that **all life and all salvation comes by way of the family**. The traditional family is under great attack in our contemporary society. We have a generation more influenced by media than by the home, often in conflict with authority, particularly of parents. The drug and alcohol abuse and suicides on college campuses no longer shock us. The anti-life movement seems to have an upper hand, at the moment, with its endless promotion of

birth control, in-vitro fertilization, embryonic stem cell research, cloning, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationships, abortion and homosexuality that so directly attack both the sanctity of marriage and family and the sanctity of life itself. The Catholic Church, to be true to its Head, must continue to teach the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman, bound in permanent commitment and covenantal love modeled on the unconditional and enduring love of God Himself for us, and the outpouring of that love in new life.

It is no surprise that the Lord saw fit, already in the early 1940's, to speak to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, visionary of the **Our Lady of America®** devotion, of the great need in our time to focus on the **renewal of the Christian family**. She stated: **"it was made known to me interiorly that my mission was to converge towards the sanctification of the family."** (Diary, pg. 4) It was later made known to Sister that this was to be accomplished specifically through the imitation of the virtues of the Holy Family, that perfect model on earth of the Most Holy Trinity's own interior "family life" of knowing and loving and giving, one person to another. One cannot love what one does not know, and one cannot know truly what one does not love. God's love is First Love, Agape Love, that totally unconditional and self-emptying Love that always takes the initiative and endlessly gives itself away. He does so through His works of creation and re-creation, redemption and sanctification. A popular song expressed it so well in secular terms: **"Love aint love until you give it away."** **Love needs a giver, a receiver, and the gift of love itself.** That

trinitarian exchange of love is redeeming and is best seen in the life of the family.

On November 8, 1954, Our Lady spoke interiorly to Sister in the following beautiful but challenging exhortation and promise:

It is the wish of my Son that fathers and mothers strive to imitate me and my chaste spouse in our holy life at Nazareth. We practiced the simple virtues of family life, Jesus our Son being the center of all our love and activity. The Holy Trinity dwelt with us in a manner far surpassing anything that can ever be imagined. For ours was the earthly paradise where once again God walked among men.

As in our little home no sin was to be found, so it is the wish of the Heart of my Son and my Immaculate Heart that sin should, as far as possible, be unheard of in the homes of our children.

The Divine Trinity will dwell in your midst only if you are faithful in practicing the virtues of our life at Nazareth. Then, you also, my children, you also will become another paradise. God will then walk among you and you will have peace.

In his encyclical on the family, *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II confirmed so well what Our Lady says in her message.

...the family, reflection of the Trinitarian communion, has as its model the family of Nazareth. Through God's mysterious design, it was in that family that the Son of God spent long years of a hidden life. It is the prototype and example for all human families. It was unique in the world... it will not fail to help Christian families to fulfill with joy the plan of God in their regard.

In one of her personal letters to Fr. Paul Leibold (later Archbishop Leibold), who would be her spiritual director for 32 years, Sister Mildred wrote about the family's role in saving the nation and the world, and in bringing peace to our world.

As the family is formed by individuals, the result of each member striving to live in the Divine Presence, in this way the family itself will be sanctified. The Father sent His Son to be a member of a family as an example to all families. The life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph was not an easy one. There were no miracles to make their living more bearable. They were no different than the families around them except in the depth of their love for the Divine Presence within them. It is holy families that will save the Nation, save the world and bring about the peace so long desired. It is indeed late but there is still time to save our world. Believe that God loves you, believe with all your heart and see what He will do for you and what you will be able to do for Him and those about you. This is a divine partnership and nothing save our lack of faith can ever break it. Believe in Him Who lives in you and nothing will be impossible of attainment. What you cannot do, He will do, only believe.

(Letter. Sr. Mildred Mary Neuzil)

“It is holy families that will save the Nation, save the world and bring about the peace so long desired.” What a challenge for our families! Not weapons, but holy families will save the world! And holiness can only be achieved through union with the Sacred Humanity and the Divine Indwelling Triune God.

If Jesus saw fit to speak the following strong warnings in locution with Sister Mildred already in the early 1940's, He must have deemed them necessary to address the increasing

breakdown of the spiritual dimension and role of the family in society and within the Church.

Woe to parents who set a bad example to their children! Terrible will be their judgment. I will demand a strict account of every soul entrusted to their care. Woe to parents who teach their children how to gain materially in this world and neglect to prepare them for the next!

Woe to children who disobey and show disrespect towards their parents! “ Honor thy father and thy mother.” On this shall they be judged most severely.

Jesus then utters blessings on those who strive to make their families like unto His Holy Family, a place where God is at home with us. An old custom was to leave an empty place at every table as a reminder that Jesus is the unseen guest at every meal, even as He is, or should be, the true head of every home. And as the head of the house, it is He Who imparts the Father’s blessings, so rich a tradition in the Faith of our ancestors, on the members of the household.

Blessed are the homes that honor My Name and the Name of My Father. Blessed are the homes where I am loved, for there the Holy Trinity dwells. Blessed are the parents and children who have made a home for God in their hearts.

On the eve of February 11, 1958, Our Lady spoke to Sister Mildred with these powerful words on the only true path to holiness for ourselves as individuals and for our families.

Beloved daughter, you wonder at the sword and the deep wound it has made in my Heart. It is the sword of grief plunged therein by my children who refuse to let me teach them the true

way. There is only one true way to the Father, my child, only one way to eternal union. It is the way of the divine humanity. It is through my Son, the Only-begotten of the Father, that souls attain perfect union with the Divinity, as perfect as human nature is capable of, aided by divine grace.

But my children will not heed; they will not listen. Every other way they will take, but not this one. (Diary, pg. 23)

How much longer will we refuse to listen to our Mother? Who is the master of our homes, and our lives? Is there a place of headship reserved for the Lord, for He is knocking, always knocking! Have we welcomed Him in?

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!

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