



**Fr Michael says:**

### **The loving Vitality of the Family"**

We know little of what has been termed the “hidden life” of Jesus and His Family. Today’s theme opens it up and presents us with a highly relevant aspect for our world today – the Family is identified with displaced people, homeless refugees! We are also made aware of what it is that keeps the Family together and gives it strength to carry on in the midst of great challenges, as the scene evokes memories of the life of Moses and his need of protection and the Exodus.

What are these strengths? Our Readings give us insights. Ecclesiasticus draws on the Wisdom of the Hebrew nation, when we are presented with a commentary on the meaning of the Commandment, “Honour your Father and Mother.” We see how the younger children relate to their parents but more importantly how older children relate to their aging parents, ensuring their care and dignity. With today’s pace of life being so much accelerated, this is particularly important as we can become neglectful or desire to put them in a home, without their need for doing that yet! After all, after God it is they who have given us all that we have! This is something particularly pleasing to God and is atonement for sin too.

Paul’s message to the people of Colossae, stresses the same message: fraternal love stems from the home, a mini-community, reflecting the harmonious relationships we seek to promote there. For this we need the virtues of patience, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, mutual forgiveness – and especially love! Consistency here leads to it being effective; parents are the key to ensure this.

The Gospel reverts to the primary role of parents – the love and care of their children. We see the great lengths that Mary and Joseph are prepared to go for Jesus and ensure His ultimate return to the Promised Land by no means an easy task, as we can see from today’s world – deep faith and love for each other will ensure their coming through safely in the end. Their life in Nazareth will indeed be hidden, to allow them to grow as family and be witnesses to their neighbours.

Jesus’ leaving home will test Mary again and what happens to Him will be the source of much concern, as she renews her “yes” on a daily basis. This concern is ours when we see the statistics on the numbers of children born outside marriage, how many single parents there are and the rate of divorce. It is not a question of not wanting a family, but the lack of discipline to ensure its fulfilment. Commitment, fidelity and self-sacrifice are needed – so many people do a wonderful job, let us give thanks for that and pray for the well being and ongoing commitment of our own families.

“If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn. If with hostility, to fight. If with ridicule, to be shy; with shame – feelings of guilt. If they live with tolerance, they learn patience. With encouragement – confidence. With praise – they appreciate. With fairness, they learn justice; with security, trust; with approval, to like themselves; with acceptance and friendship – they learn to find love and good in the world.”



**Fr Jean-Marie says:**

## **The Holy Family Year A**

The birth of a child is always a happy event in a family. Husband and wife become a complete family when a child is born. On Christmas day, with the birth of Jesus, the family of Joseph and Mary was complete. Thus the Holy Family that we celebrate today is the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. On this feast of the Holy Family, we are shown that Mary and Joseph did everything for the baby Jesus to grow. The very reason and heart of their family was Jesus. They fulfilled their duty as parents towards their child as they protected him.

In the gospel from St Matthew, we read of the angel appearing to Joseph and telling him to take the Child and Mary into Egypt until it was safe to return. Joseph carried out the angel's instruction showing him to be a true father and guardian to Jesus. What is typical for us in the Holy Family is that in everything they sought God's will; and this will be characteristic too for Jesus, God's will was to be his only desire. In what we call the Holy Family, there was a totally comfortable relationship between the human and the divine. Making space and time for God within the confines of our own family living is to become a holy family. A family, where God is given space and time, is truly rich, even if they're not wealthy. Let the heart of our families, too, be Jesus, and with him and Mary and Joseph, we ask ourselves what God wants of us and we do it.

Sometimes when our parents become old, we prefer to get away from them because we do not want to take care of them at a time when they depend on us. Today in our first reading, we are told to honour and look after our parents without conditions. We are reminded to respect them. The author tells us that in so doing we also respect, honour and obey the Father of us all. If we respect our old parents and care for them we shall be blessed and our sins will be forgiven. This is a reminder to us of the fourth commandment, that we should honor our parents, not only when they are young, but also when they are old and in need of our care. Taking care of our old parents is a sign of thanksgiving to them for what they did for us in our childhood; to raise us up until we become mature. If you do not take care of your parents in need; you know that there is something wrong with you. It is a clear sign of your lack of generosity. It shames us if we fail to take care of our old parents, and nobody will respect us.

Finally, in our second reading St Paul tells us how we should live in families. He reminds us of the virtues which should characterize the relationships between all Christians in the larger family of the children of God and also within the smaller family.

Today we are called on to honestly evaluate our relationship with our family and to do what we can to live the ideal found in today's readings.