

HOLY FAMILY SUNDAY HOMILY

1. Families are interesting
 - a. From outside many families seem to have life altogether
 - b. They can seem calm, intact and happy
 - c. Yet so often, if we look within they are struggling with tensions, identity conflicts or whatever issue can arise
2. There are many examples of family life besides the idealized nuclear family
 - a. Single parents trying to raise children on their own
 - b. Blended families, where two different groups of children, having their own proper order suddenly are mixed together
 - c. There are families who adopt children in addition to any born to the parents
 - d. Extended families can be even more interesting with multiple sets of grandparents
3. Today's feast celebrates the Holy Family
 - a. Image often presented is father, mother and child
 - b. They are not such a simple family
 - c. Luke's Gospel does not dwell on Joseph's misgivings about Mary's pregnancy
 - d. But there is a clear reference: Joseph is traveling to Bethlehem, with his betrothed who is with child
 - i. Joseph presumably knows he is not the father, but he still accepts Mary
 - e. They are a refugee family forced to leave home to go to a strange town for a census
 - f. Too poor to find normal lodgings, must find a cave with a manger or feeding trough to lay her newborn baby
4. We come to today's gospel
 - a. They come to the temple for the ceremony of redemption
 - i. Firstborn always must be redeemed by sacrifice of a lamb or 2 pigeons for the poor
 - b. Appear at first like an ordinary family suddenly amazing things happen

- i. Prophet Simeon declares that this child is long-awaited one, destined for the rise and fall of many
 - ii. Elderly prophetess, Anna, speaks of Jesus being involved in the redemption of Israel
 - c. After being amazed, the family returns to Nazareth in Galilee although Matthew presents a side trip as refugees in Egypt
 - i. Other than the finding in the temple, the Gospels do not speak of Jesus private life
 - ii. All we know is that at some point, Joseph disappears from the picture, probably dying
 - iii. Jesus spends thirty years, probably supporting His mother and coming to terms with His unique identity of being both God and human
 - iv. We know that Jesus at end of death gives His mother to the care of the beloved disciple
- 5. In Jesus public life, he proclaims that family is not one rigid structure based on blood or family
 - a. He went so far to say that anyone who believes His words is mother, brother or sister to Him
- 6. The first two readings speak of wonders of family for Abraham
 - a. God calls him to go to Canaan to be father of many nations
 - b. But he does not have any children, finally he asks how can this be
 - c. But by faith he and Sarah are given a child when way beyond child-bearing years
 - d. Hebrews notes how God tested Abraham's faith asking Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac
 - e. Then giving him a ram in place
- 7. Readings remind us that family is not about appearances or even customs
 - a. God operates in mysterious ways, families may not always be as traditional as they may seem
 - b. Ultimately, families are about relationships grounded in faith
 - c. Members of families are most apt to find fulfillment as they attempt to discern and live God's plan.