

## Holy Family

A child asked his father, "How were people born?" So, his father said, "Adam and Eve made babies, then their babies become adults and made babies, and so on." The child then went to his mother, asked her the same question and she told him, "We were monkeys then we evolved to become like we are now." The child ran back to his father and said, "You lied to me!" His father replied, "No, your mom was talking about her side of the family."

Dear Friends,

This week we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. There are three articles in the daily meditations book, *The Word Among Us*, on the Holy Family which I liked. There is a cover picture on that book featuring the famous work of Michaelangelo's *Doni Tondo*, a circular Masterpiece painted in the early 1500s. One of the unusual aspects of this painting is the movement it depicts: Mary, who is seated, is handing the baby Jesus over her right shoulder to Joseph, who is behind her. Paintings such as Michelangelo can help us view the Holy Family not just as subjects of beautiful art, but as a real family who despite their unique calling, had similar joys and struggles to what we have.

There are three things mentioned in that article: 1) A solid foundation: Even before they lived together as husband and wife, both Mary and Joseph had rich faith lives. We read in the scripture about Joseph that he was an honest and righteous man (Matthew 1:19). Mary trusted God in her life. To live as a holy family, we need to have a solid relationship with God as a family and as well as individually.

2. Lively faith: I hear people say growing up they were all Catholics and they all went to church. We all brought our children to church. How was our faith? Mary and Joseph kept their faith more lively. The first reading from the book of Sirach talks about the ideal family dynamics. Honoring parents is part of family life. How do we keep our faith lively? I can share my part. In my family, we prayed together as a family in my childhood. It might look harsh, but that helped me to grow close to God. Every night after our church prayer, we prayed at our house as a family before dinner. If you didn't go to pray, there was no dinner. That helped me to become a priest. Even today, my dad leads the evening prayer at our church. I had seen my brother's family, they all kneel and pray and read the scripture every morning as soon as they get up. My sister's family prays the Rosary every day after dinner together. How is your family prayer life? Is it lively? Or does it become obligatory in nature?

3. Strong marriages: The feast of the Holy Family was more of a private devotion popularized by some religious congregations for many centuries. Pope Pius XI made this feast more 'official' in the year 1921. The reason behind such a move, as I see it, was the First World War. This war was over in 1918.

Strong families and marriages are the main challenges today to our world. We are not ready to commit to something. People are hesitant to have a committed and long lasting relationship. These generations were not brought in a way to accept patience, kindness, and other virtues. For everything they need fast answers and solutions. In India, invariably in all religions, marriages take place in religious places (either church, temple, or mosque). Jesus was a part of the human family. It is a little mystery of divine nature. But, it is to show his love and affection for the family. I did some research on why people didn't want to marry. The two things I found were fear and lack of commitment, maybe the third would be the economy. God wants our families. He loves our families. Let us pray for strong families and strong marriages.