

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph—

Why did Jesus come to us within a family?

I think it is because the family is the perfect image of God

And we are made in His image and likeness

Every one of us has entered the world as a part of a family

We are all shaped by our family

When you look on the internet

Or check the news at the end of the year

We see all these stories about the most important event of 2017

Some of these do and will impact our lives, no doubt

But what has the most impact on our life

Any one of these events

Or the events within our family

Births, illnesses and deaths

Weddings and births of children

Graduations, new jobs and retirements

When these are a part of the family

They affect who we are

Now we all know our families are far from perfect

Some are barely a family at all

But they are a reflection of the family

Even if the mirror glass is broken

In our first reading

We see the family as a bridge between generations

It is a structure of parental authority

And it holds the potential for harmony and long-lasting joy

These are a part of God's plan for the family

The family is what connects us to generations past

And is our connection to the future

We have a responsibility to both

Taking care of our parents or grandparents in their old age

Even those before them

Those we may not have even known

We can offer Masses for them

For the repose of their souls

This is how we care for our elders

It is also how we connect with the future generations

Passing these virtues to the next generation

The family is also how we teach patience, forgiveness and prayer

And it is in the family that we practice these virtues

We learn these together

And it can be a messy place to learn

**We can look at the family as a kind of a factory or manufacturing
plant**

Go on a tour of a plant and what do you see?

Tools may be lying about

Some projects may be almost completed

Some may be just starting

There might be a break-down that needs repair

New plans laid out in the office

This is what St Paul is showing us in his letter to the Colossians

The family is our factory of faith

Where we learn patience

Responsibility

Cooperation and self-discipline

Self-control and how to deal with authority

It is where we learn how to become disciples

Our Gospel teaches that the family is also the core of our faith lives

Mary and Joseph bring the child into the Temple

Binding their infant child to God's family

The rituals of our faith bind us to God's family today

The big events such as baptism's

Weddings, confirmation, first Communion

The sacrament of penance

The anointing of the sick

Holy Orders

When I was ordained, it was a family celebration

Not just my personal family

But my parish family

Even friends that are not Catholic

They came to the Cathedral or came to my 1st Mass at home

The response was so humbling

We see that when we celebrate these as a family

Ties are formed

Like threads in a garment

Woven together into something much grander than an individual thread

But it isn't enough to celebrate only the milestones

We need that continual, everyday growth

Coming to Sunday Mass as a family

Praying the Rosary or other prayers not only for the family

But as a family

Doing these we become more than a family

Our lives are enriched beyond the natural ties

We see ourselves as a part of something bigger than us

We are a part of the mission of the Church

The Church's concerns become ours

The family life of the Church matters to us

**Just as bringing Christ to the Temple made the Holy Family a
living cell of the Temple**

Our families are living cells of the Church today

Spanning generations past

While preparing for the future

Whatever it may bring

Forgiving and being forgiven

Entering into these on-going projects with all our heart

Placing all our trust in God's never-ending mercy

With our families as an intimate part of His family

Making the opening prayer of our Mass today

The prayer of our home and our parish

O God, who were pleased to give us

The shining example of the Holy Family

Graciously grant that we may imitate them

In practicing the virtues of family life

In the bonds of charity

And so, in the joy of your house

Delight one day in eternal rewards.

Amen