

Saint Luke the Evangelist Catholic Parish Blackburn South

46 Orchard Grove Blackburn South Vic 3130

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WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 30 DECEMBER 2018 THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH – YEAR C

THE YEAR OF SAINT LUKE - BEING THE GOOD NEWS & PROMOTING GOD'S HOSPITALITY

This week's readings: 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28; 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24; Gospel Luke 2:41-52

GOSPEL REFLECTION BY GREG SUNTER: We live in an era when we are constantly hearing about the demise of the family and the demise of family values. It seems that the family is under constant attack. Divorce rates are at an all-time high and a huge number of young people are raised in single-parent families, divided families or blended families. To talk about a 'typical' family is increasingly irrelevant. What we are learning to appreciate more and more is the diversity of family experience. Despite all this, there is no disputing the value of the family unit. Family is at the heart of our society; at the heart of our development; and at the heart of our Church. When we stop and think about it, the Holy Family that we honour today wasn't exactly what we might describe as a 'typical' family and yet they provide a model for all families.

In today's gospel, we get a snapshot of family life for Jesus, Mary and Joseph at a time when Jesus was 12 years old. We're reminded that the family was a faithful Jewish family, attending the Passover celebrations in Jerusalem every year. We're also reminded that it is at the Passover celebrations some 20 or so years later that Jesus will be tried and crucified. When Mary chastises the boy Jesus, he reminds her that he needs to be busy with his Father's affairs. Mary and Joseph are confused by this, perhaps forgetting momentarily that Jesus is referring to his heavenly Father. This incident, so often dismissed as background 'colour' to the gospel narrative, conveys the significant truth that Jesus shared a family relationship with Mary and Joseph, but also shared a family relationship with God, his Father. It reminds us that Jesus called all of us to enter into the relationship he shared with his Father.

Historical Context – Jesus the Jew: This gospel passage reminds us of the fact that Jesus and his family were faithful Jews throughout their lives. Although in his public ministry Jesus challenged some of the practices and attitudes of the institutional religion, he nevertheless remained faithful throughout his life. In this incident, we see the practice of travelling to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and we also see the very Jewish method of teaching and exploring Torah through question and answer. Some people oddly struggle with the notion of Jesus as a Jew and yet the gospels repeatedly demonstrate how he was faithful to the tradition.

Have you thought? Mary: We're told in today's gospel that Mary 'stored up all these things in her heart'. Mary is a model of the reflective life. When extraordinary, life-altering events occur to her, she is portrayed as pondering these events in her heart. She responds to these events by allowing them to speak to her and speak to her heart rather than simply 'reacting' as so many of us do. The ability to reflect on events, rather than react to them, can lead to a much better considered response and less chance of making the same mistakes over and over again.

Living the Gospel – Importance of family: It is sometimes easy to glibly declare that our families are important to us, but it is in the everyday living of family life that we have the opportunity to demonstrate how serious we are. It is inevitable, as we establish our individual identity, that we will at times clash with our family's expectations and challenge the authority of parents. However, we can never forget the love, care and security our family has provided throughout our lives. Parents try to protect their children from disappointment and harm and reflect the love of God when they're repeatedly prepared to try again with damaged family relationships.

Raise your voices ...

Entrance antiphon: The shepherds went in haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger.

Response to the Psalm: How happy are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.

Gospel acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Open our heart, O Lord, to listen to the words of your Son. Alleluia!

Communion antiphon: Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.

Saint Luke the Evangelist Catholic Parish Blackburn South

We are Companions on the Journey ...

www.cam.org.au/blackburnsouth

Whitehorse Deanery
Eastern Region
Archdiocese of Melbourne

Rev Father Gerard Johnson
Parish Priest

Sonya O'Farrell

Part-time Parish Secretary
Wednesdays, Thursdays &
Fridays (currently on leave)
10.00am – 2.00pm

Email: blackburnsouth@cam.org.au

Website:

www.cam.org.au/blackburnsouth

SUNDAY MASS

Saturday Vigil – 6:00pm
Sunday – 8:30am & 10:30am

WEEKDAY MASS & ROSARY

Tues. 11.00am

Weekday Mass

Weds. – Sat. @ 9:00am

(not Friday this week)

Rosary prayed after Mass times as
listed above. All welcome.

RECONCILIATION

Saturday 9.30am & 5.30pm

EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

The Blessed Sacrament is
exposed for Adoration

Wednesday

Start: 7:00pm | End: 8:00pm

WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS

By appointment and
six months (6) notice, please.
(This helps with the planning of both
celebrations and Parents usually know
nine months in advance when their
baby is to be born).

St Luke the Evangelist
Catholic Parish Primary School
46 Orchard Grove,
Blackburn South Vic 3130
Tel: (03) 9877 4023

Mrs Jackie Purcell: Principal

Email:

principal@slblackburnst.catholic.edu.au

Website:

stlukes@slblackburnst.catholic.edu.au

Prayer to Saint Luke the Evangelist

Lord God, who chose Saint Luke to reveal
by his preaching and writings the mystery of
your love for the poor, grant that those who
already glory in your name may persevere
as one heart and one soul and that all
nations may merit to see your salvation.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit, one God,
for ever and ever. Amen!

Patron Saint of artists, physicians, surgeons.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER all who are sick and for those Parishioners unable to be
among us this weekend. For those who died recently and for all those whose
anniversaries occur about this time, may they all rest in peace.

SOME PARISHIONERS HAVE ENQUIRED about Mr Karlis Mundeciem's Funeral. It
will be held in our Parish on Friday 4th January at 10.30am. Please be advised that our
weekly Friday Morning Mass will then begin at 10.30am rather than the usual 9.00am.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK: Christmas Time. **Monday:** St Sylvester I, pope;
Tuesday: Mary, The Holy Mother of God; **Wednesday:** Sts Basil the Great & Gregory
Nazianzen; **Thursday:** The Holy Name of Jesus; **Sunday Masses:** Preface I of the Nativity
of the Lord, Eucharistic Prayer I. Christmas Communicantes in Eucharistic Prayer I.
Eucharistic Acclamation No. I.

A VOCATION VIEW: Jesus grew in wisdom, age, and grace in the midst of his family.
How is your family growing in the midst of these challenging times? Seek out God's
grace. (Luke 2:41-52)

STEWARDSHIP CORNER: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be
called children of God; and so we are." 1 JOHN 3:1 During this season of giving, let us
remember the most important gift we have received – being children of God. As God's
children, it's important that we express our love for others as well. Tell your spouse,
children and other family members and friends that you love them, frequently.

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR GREETINGS to all Parishioners and Guests who have
joined us this year to celebrate this Festive time. Thankyou for your kind wishes, cards,
Christmas Offering and gifts on this, my first Christmas with you. Your faithfulness to our
Weekly Parish Stewardship and Presbytery collections is very much appreciated. May
you enjoy this festive season with those closest to you and may the New Year pass slowly
as we savour the goodness of Family Life that has been given and shared with us. And
thankyou to all Parishioners who have contributed to making our festive celebrations so
memorable this year; especially Belinda and Paul Rose for the Christmas lights, inflatable
Crib and Sign that have 'lit up' the outside of our Church and have added to our season
of joy this year. Please travel safely, gentle regards Fr Gerard

DEAR PARISHIONERS: I write to notify you that Mrs Jackie Purcell has accepted a
new role in Catholic education. Her years here have certainly made our Parish School
an outstanding educational community and we thank her for her considerable and
significant contribution. Please be assured that the leadership structure that exists in our
Parish School will continue to serve us all well as 2019 begins. Mr Ed Weekes has kindly
accepted the role of Acting Principal for the foreseeable future. This will be a transition
time for all of us. Ms Purcell takes up her new role on the 4 March 2019. Appointing a
new Principal to our Parish Primary School will now be my one of my most important
duties next year.

THIS WEEKEND'S FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY: Please find on the notice table a
'Landmarks' article wanting to foster the value of Family. Please take one with you as
you go this weekend.

PARISH CARE GROUP 2018 CHRISTMAS HAMPER RAFFLE WINNERS:

First Prize: Lynda Kilroe-Smith; **Second Prize:** Krislyn Ariaratnam; **Third Prize:** Frances
Davidson. Once again, a genuine thankyou for your generous support of our Raffle this
year. The proceeds all go to supporting the Parish Care Group's ministry during 2019.

NEWSLETTER NOTICES: Please send to the following e-mail address by **Wednesday
5pm** – BlackburnSouth@cam.org.au

PLENARY COUNCIL 2020: WHAT IS GOD ASKING OF US IN AUSTRALIA AT THIS TIME?

The Plenary Council 2020 is a gathering of the Church in Australia to make decisions
for the future. All people are invited to contribute to
the Plenary Council agenda by sharing their
experience of faith and of the Church. The Plenary
Council agenda will be developed from the stories
you share and the questions you raise. Our questions
about and our hopes for the Church will arise from
hearts that listen to the Spirit. This week is an
opportunity to gather responses. The challenge still
stands to invite all our Parishioners to pray the Plenary
Council Prayer at the end of our Prayers of the Faithful

and especially throughout the coming week:

*Lord, in this holy season of prayer and song and celebration
Open our ears to the songs of the angels as they tell of Good News
Give us joyful hearts as we sing and pray and celebrate
Awaken our hearts anew to your presence
Encourage us in our efforts to speak boldly and with prayerful discernment
Lead us in our work toward the Plenary Council 2020
That we may continue to proclaim 'Joy to the world, the Lord is here!'
Amen*

<http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/have-your-say/>

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS who have walked upon
and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep
spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to
this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation. (Our sign
will be installed in our Church foyer soon.)



Plenary Council 2020
Listen to what the Spirit is saying...

PARISH MINISTRY ROSTER: *Liturgical Rosters Go into Recess Now for January*

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

29 AND 30 DEC. 2018

SATURDAY	6:00 PM	Monica Hodder
SUNDAY	8:30 AM	Megan McLean
	10:30 AM	Marg Yore

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

29 AND 30 DEC. 2018

SATURDAY	6:00 PM	Olivia Hammill
SUNDAY	8:30 AM	Godfrey Thong
	10:30 AM	Margaret Gearon

SLIDE OPERATORS

29 AND 30 DEC. 2018

SATURDAY	6:00 PM	David Prabha
SUNDAY	8:30 AM	Darren McLean
	10:30 AM	Manny Gonzalez

CHURCH CLEANING

5 JAN. 2019

Team 8 (Judy's Team)
Judy Noy, Chelsea Brown,
Debbie Brown & Sarah Santilli

POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE TO YOUNG PEOPLE FOR WORLD YOUTH DAY

JANUARY 22-27 2019: Ask God "What do you want from me?" — and allow God to answer you. The **Holy Father's Message** to young people in preparation for the **XXXIV World Youth Day 2019**, which will be celebrated in **Panama**, is centred on the theme: "I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). The Message, published on the day of the celebration of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, concludes a cycle of three Marian messages dedicated to young people along their journey WYD 2016 to WYD 2019. Please visit this web address for more information: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20181121_videomessaggio-panama-gmg.html

POPE'S "URBI ET ORBI" MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

CHRISTMAS 2018: "... What does that Child, born for us of the Virgin Mary, have to tell us? What is the universal message of Christmas? It is that God is a good Father and we are all brothers and sisters. This truth is the basis of the Christian vision of humanity. Without the fraternity that Jesus Christ has bestowed on us, our efforts for a more just world fall short, and even our best plans and projects risk being soulless and empty. For this reason, my wish for a happy Christmas is a wish for fraternity. Fraternity among individuals of every nation and culture. Fraternity among people with different ideas, yet capable of respecting and listening to one another. Fraternity among persons of different religions. Jesus came to reveal the face of God to all those who seek him. The face of God has been revealed in a human face."

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/urbi/documents/papa-francesco_20181225_urbi-et-orbi-natale.html

QUEEN ELIZABETH USES CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO CALL FOR GOODWILL BETWEEN THOSE WITH 'MOST DEEPLY-HELD DIFFERENCES':

The monarch used her annual address to urge people to show decency and "goodwill" to all. It's a message that broadly addresses the challenges the world faced in 2018. "Even in the most deeply held differences, treating the other person with respect and as a fellow human being is always a good first step towards greater understanding," she said. "... The Queen spoke of the 'baffling paradoxes' of life, by which 'human beings have a huge propensity for good, and yet a capacity for evil'. 'Even the power of faith, which frequently inspires great generosity and self-sacrifice, can fall victim to tribalism,' she said. 'Some cultures believe a long life brings wisdom. I'd like to think so. Perhaps, part of that wisdom is to recognize some of life's baffling paradoxes such as the way human beings have a huge propensity for good, and yet a capacity for evil. Even the power of faith which frequently inspires great generosity and self-sacrifice can fall victim to tribalism. But through the many changes I have seen over the years: **faith, family, and friendship** have been not only a constant for me, but a source of personal comfort and reassurance. ... The Christmas story retains its appeal since it doesn't provide theoretical explanations for the puzzles of life. Instead it's about the birth of a child and the hope that birth 2,000 years ago brought to the world. Only a few people acknowledged Jesus when he was born. Now billions follow him. 'I believe his message of peace on earth and goodwill to all is never out of date.' For more information please visit this web page: <https://www.worldnewslive4you.com/2018/12/26/full-text-of-queens-christmas-day-message-to-the-nation/>

ARCHBISHOP PETER A COMENSOLI'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

WEDNESDAY 19 DECEMBER 2018: "Every baby born comes with a promise: that life is always stronger than death. This promise is a powerful gift – the gift of hope. At Christmas we remember one baby, who was born for all: one life, stronger than any death. **The birth of Jesus is the world's greatest gift of hope**, for it is not a new thing or idea or plan that Jesus brings, but a new life, his own. ..." For more information please visit this webpage: <http://melbournecatholic.org.au/Melbourne-News/archbishop-peter-a-comensolis-christmas-message-2>

SAFETY STATEMENT: We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable adults in our Church. Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish Blackburn South holds the care, safety, wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel. <http://pol.org.au/blackburnsouth/Policies.aspx>

Parish Groups & Contacts

Do not our hearts burn within us as we walk along ...

**Lectors, Welcomers Collectors
Extraordinary Ministers of the
Eucharist, & Rosters**

Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135

Children's Liturgy Group

Nina Grieve - 9877 4023

Jess Kilroe-Smith - 0452 613 863

Stewardship Counters

Dale Dixon - 0433 885 087

Steve Kilroe-Smith - 0404 864 232

Pastoral Council &

Child Safety Officer

Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

History

Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135

Whitehorse Deanery

Finance Committee

Steve Brennan

Parish Accountant

Hall Hire

Parish Office - 9877 2292

Care Group & Gardens

Judy Noy - 9894 1506

Church Sacristan

Greg Grant 0401 644 474

Church Linen

Toni Plevier

Church Cleaning & Flowers

Megan McLean 0419 347 693

Maintenance

T.B.A.

Holy Communion

to the housebound

Parish & School Choirs

Maria Pinto, Lina Mafi

0411 136 043

Marg Yore & Kat Bergin

9877 4023

Parish - School Liaison

Sonya O'Farrell

Parish and School

Fete Committee

Ed Weekes - 9877 4023

Parish School Advisory Board

Ed Weekes - 9877 4023

Parish School

Parents' Association

Ed Weekes - 9877 4023

St Vincent de Paul Conference

For Assistance: 1800 305 330

(Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)

Parish Contact:

Margaret Gearon

RECRUITMENT NOTICE:

These Parish Groups welcome new members who choose to participate in the life of the Parish in these ways – would you like to make contact with one or more of them?

Escape into Egypt



The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Year C

An Angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt. Draw the angel speaking to Joseph in his dream.

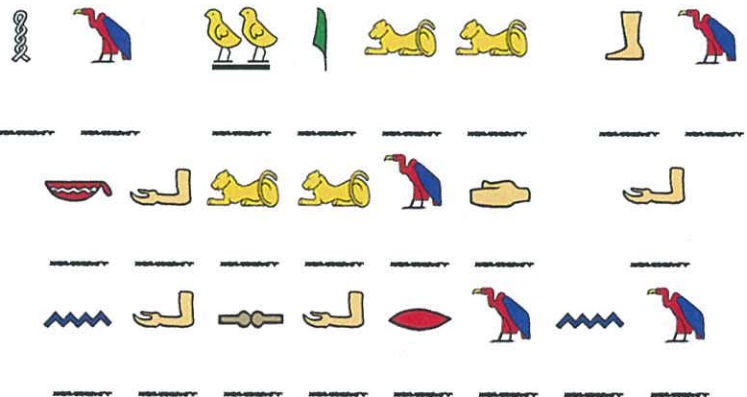


Joseph listened to the angel's warning because he trusted in God. Write down some of the names of those who you trust.

DECODE THE PROPHECY

Use the code below to decipher the prophet's message

A		G		L		Q		V	
B		H		M		R		W	
C		I		N		S		X	
D		J		O		T		Y	
E		K		P		U		Z	



Family: an adventure in love

OK. We all admit it. Family life is difficult.

What family does not know the tension of a personality clash, the heartache of a tragedy, the dull pain of daily irritations?

Family life is a challenge because the stakes are so high. What other relationship can hold out so much promise: a lifelong sense of belonging, a rare depth of intimacy, the experience of creating life itself?

Family life is indeed a risky adventure in love; a relational experience at the core of human existence with the power to make or break not only persons, but society itself.

Small wonder that it came under the microscope of Church reflections at the 1980 Synod on the Family where bishops around the world met with Pope John Paul II to feed back the issues and concerns of families in their dioceses.

From that meeting emerged a papal document (technically described as a post-synodal apostolic exhortation) titled *Familiaris Consortio*: 'The Christian Family in the Modern World.'

One night...

'When our baby daughter was very sick, her ear infection made it too painful for her to lie down in her cot. My husband sat up all night cradling her feverish little body in his arms so that she and I could both sleep. This incident has given me an image of God's love which I will treasure always.' (FP)

God's plan for marriage and family. (FC, 11-16)

What is family all about? In *Familiaris Consortio* John Paul II takes us right back to basics: God is love. How simple that sounds; and yet there is nothing more fundamental to human existence. Created in God's image, each person is called into being *through* love and *for* love.

The Church identifies marriage as one clear way in which human persons live out their vocation to love. In marriage husband and wife say to each other: "All of me is yours forever." It is a total gift of one's personhood. Spouses hold nothing back in seeking a deeply personal unity of body, heart and soul. This bond of marital love holds great significance for the Church community. The daily surrender of husband and wife to one another in marriage reflects the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Married love is a special sign or 'sacrament' of the way Christ loves us - completely, unconditionally, forever.

From love comes life

Out of this love between a man and a woman comes more of God's love: a child created in God's image. That the unity of married love expressed in sexual intercourse is inseparable from its lifegiving dimension is an important belief for the Catholic community and explains why it cannot accept contraceptive practices which separate the two. (see FC,32)

Unlike artificial forms of contraception, natural methods of family planning enable a couple to make responsible decisions about the size and spacing of their family without compromising the sacred 'language' of sexual intercourse by which a spouse says: *I give you all of me - my manhood/ womanhood, my capacity to bring forth life, my deepest self. And I want to receive and accept all of you.*

It is this selfgiving union between man and woman and the new human life generated, which makes marriage a foundation stone of the wider family community, the Church and society.

Something sacred

'In our love-making, Geoff and I are aware of something sacred happening. It is as if we are saying to each other: "Take, this is my body, given for you." For us, sexual intercourse is a sacred "rite" through which we celebrate and strengthen the love bond between us.' (Sue)

Power-cell of life & love

The role of the Christian family

Put simply: the mission of the family is to BE what it IS, namely 'an intimate communion of life and love' (FC, 17). How does it do this? *Familiaris Consortio* identifies four ways:

1. Families form community. (FC, 18-27)

'Love one another' is the gospel commandment at the heart of family life. If the world is to be a place of self-giving love, then it has to start with the tiniest cell of human loving: the married couple and their family.

Through countless everyday caring actions in the lives of spouses, children, extended family and neighbours, the family acts as a little 'power cell' of hope in the world at large. From the lifegiving presence of a newborn child to the wisdom of an elderly grandparent, 'all members...have the grace and responsibility of building day by day, the communion of persons, making the family "a school of deeper humanity": this happens where there is care and love for the little ones, the sick,

the aged; where there is mutual service every day; where there is a sharing of goods, of joys and of sorrows' (FC, 21).

Loving each other is not easy. Every family has its share of tension and conflict. *Familiaris Consortio* acknowledges that 'family communion can only be preserved...through a great spirit of sacrifice' (n.21). Family members are called to develop gospel qualities such as generosity, openness, forgiveness and to recognise each other's dignity and gifts. Strengthened by the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, families find the grace to move towards the ardent desire of Jesus 'that they may be one' (Jn 17:21).

2. Families serve life. (FC, 28-41)

While having children is not the only fruit of marriage, it is without doubt a precious way in which the family brings forth new life into the world. In this way each new person bears the imprint of the divine image, the original blessing of the Creator.

Bringing forth a child includes the responsibility of helping that new

The decision

'I have a childhood memory of my parents standing in the kitchen exchanging sharp words. Suddenly my father broke the cycle of tension, went up to my mum and tapped her gently on the arm saying expectantly, "Hey, tell me something..." Her scowl relaxed into a half-smile before returning her half of the equation. "I love you," she said. I came to understand that this little exchange, repeated over 42 years of marriage, symbolised for them a decision: No issue is so big that we will allow it to come between our love for each other.' (VC)

A forgiving home

'For years after my divorce I prayed that I would be a good parent to my children. Then one day it dawned on me that the best prayer I could pray was a prayer of forgiveness. Jack had left me and I had never forgiven him for that. Of course, I thought I had, but instead I had simply shut down part of my heart. Here I was trying to be "super-mum", but ignoring the fact that my parenthood had come from my marriage, and the more at peace I was with my ex-husband, the more at peace my children would be.

'After that my prayer changed. Each day I asked Jesus to bring healing into the woundedness of my married life. I prayed that, with this forgiveness, I could communicate to my children that they were the fruit of our love, even if that love had been far from perfect. Many tears flowed. I began to realise the extent of the pain beneath my "super-parent" image.

'Over time I have seen the power of this kind of prayer. There is a growing peace in our home. The children feel freer to talk about their daddy, what they miss about him, how they feel angry sometimes. And I can handle their questions peacefully. Bitterness wells up from time to time, but I have a better way to deal with it.' (Terry)

Bright spots and shadows for the family today. (see FC, 4-10)

Familiaris Consortio is responding to a critical moment in history; an era in which the family finds itself grappling with a multitude of conflicting forces - some positively enriching, others destructive. In the pressure-cooker of life, it is not always easy to distinguish between these social forces. Sometimes a positive attribute such as 'personal autonomy' is exaggerated and becomes selfish pursuit, bringing not freedom but inner slavery; and a seemingly distasteful demand such as 'self-sacrifice' can in fact bring a depth of inner freedom never thought possible.

Through *Familiaris Consortio* the Church calls all families to a careful 'discernment'; i.e. an informed and prayerful reflection on the meaning of life and its fundamental values. In this way families can make wise judgments amidst the complex array of choices offered in today's society.

at the heart of the Church's mission

person to live a fully human life.

Familiaris Consortio emphasizes the fact that parents are the prime educators of their children. Certainly other people and agencies (e.g., schools) can help. But when it comes to forming a child in God's laws of love, nothing can replace the impact of the parents and the family community. It is in the atmosphere of the home that a child 'catches' a spirit of love...or discovers its lack. It is through the religious practices of the home that a child first senses a reverence for God...or feels the absence of faith. It is in the family unit that a child first learns 'those social virtues which every society needs' (FC,37), including a spirit of service, self-sacrifice and respect for one's sexuality.

The task of the Christian family to educate its members is a true ministry through which the Gospel is spread, says *Familiaris Consortio*. Do not think of your family responsibilities as something separate or secondary to the mission of the Church. When you teach your children (and they teach you!) to love, to pray, to celebrate

the sacraments and to serve one's neighbour, you are not just 'helping' the Church's mission, you are living its very mission!

So central is the family to the life and mission of the Church that it is often called the 'domestic church' or the 'little church'. 'The family, called together by word and sacrament as the Church of the home, is both teacher and mother, the same as the worldwide Church' (FC,38).

Queen Emily

'Emily is our youngest child. At a family meal on the eve of her First Communion day, all her big brothers and sisters decided to dress up in formal wear—suits, bow ties, evening dresses, the works—to make it a very special occasion in her honour. Pretty amazing given their usual attire of jeans and T-shirts!

'We had a lot of laughs and Emily felt like a queen. The Body of Christ we received the next day was all the more a special experience because of the presence of Christ we had celebrated in one another the night before.' (M & MJ)

Pastoral care of the family

(see FC,65-85)

In this section, which addresses the many difficulties facing couples and families, two key themes emerge: **COMPASSION** and **TRUTH**. The beliefs held by the Church about marriage and family can be painful for many people. The wounds of hurt, failure and disillusionment run deep. Faced with such pain we can be tempted to stop speaking the truth; for instance, we might avoid saying things like 'marriage is forever'. But when we do this we only undermine our capacity to live the truth. We rob married people of encouragement, we rob our children of inspiration, and we fail to recognize the enormity of a divorced person's loss. Instead of diluting our Catholic beliefs, let us courageously **SPEAK** them with love and sensitivity; let us gently **LISTEN** to each other's experience of joy, loss, hope, loneliness and **REACH OUT** with healing hands.

Families have a vital role in protecting human life.

Against the pessimism of anti-life attitudes that cast a shadow over the world, families are called to say 'YES' to life.

It is through the supportive, practical love of families that the Church can most effectively express its conviction:

'...that human life, even if weak and suffering, is always a splendid gift of God's goodness... In each human life she sees the splendour of that 'YES', that 'Amen', who is Christ himself. To the "No" which assails and afflicts the world, she replies with this living "Yes"' (FC, 30).

Think/Talk/Act: Describe a family whom you admire for the way its members live this 'Yes!' to life. In a letter or phone call, communicate your admiration.

Family: first & vital cell of society

3. Families participate in the development of society

(FC, 43-44)

In a society that is becoming increasingly dehumanized by its glorification of material and technological power, families can offer an essential humanizing and personalizing influence. In a family, one's value as a person is not determined by salary, status, age or talents. Rather, a family says to each member: *We love you simply for who you are: you belong to us.*

By virtue of their lifestyle of mutual giving and receiving, families are a potent force in society. Since a lack of love is at the root of so many social ills, the world's future depends heavily on the strength and quality of family life.

Through practical hospitality and service among their neighbours, families have an enormous contribution to make to social justice and development. In turn, the State must recognise that *'the family is a society in its own original right...The State*

cannot and must not take away from families the functions that they can just as well perform on their own or in free associations; instead it must positively favour and encourage as far as possible initiative by families' (FC, 45).

4. Families share in the life and mission of the Church.

Just as we refer to Jesus as 'prophet, priest and king', so is the Christian family called to be:

(i) Prophetic

The witness of a Christian family is a 'luminous sign' to its neighbours. Families have a mission to speak and share their lived faith with enthusiasm and conviction. (see FC, 51-54)

(ii) Sacred

How does a family stay open to God? Some tips in this section include family prayer (e.g., grace before meals, reading the scriptures), a spirit of forgiveness, drawing strength from the sacraments, fostering a love for the mother of Jesus. (see FC, 55-62)

'For those who have no natural family the doors of the great family which is the Church...must be opened even wider. No one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family for everyone...' (FC, 85).

The credibility of the above statement rests on the hospitality of our own hearts and homes. In what ways has your (i) family (ii) parish offered somebody 'a place to call home'?

Healing love

'In my neighbourhood lives a couple with three adopted children. The children all suffered abuse at their original homes. One child had been so emotionally damaged that his speech was impaired. For a long time he hardly spoke. Thankfully, his adoptive parents have given him a lifegiving home. With all the love lavished upon him, a bond of trust is strengthening and his speech is returning.' (CA)

(iii) Outreaching

The family's mission as 'a community of service' extends beyond itself to the wider community. Families are called to exercise their social conscience as a natural expression of the Christ-like laws of service and justice at work in their homes. (see FC, 63-64)

Conclusion

Familiaris Consortio concludes with a reminder about the power of family love to change the world. The three year public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth did not arise out of the blue. It was in the hidden and uncelebrated years of family life—growing up in the home of Joseph and Mary—that the foundations of his ministry were laid. By reflecting on the impact of the Holy Family in history, may we have hope in the love which lies 'hidden' in our own families and its bearing on the future of the world. With John Paul II we pray, *'May each Christian family become a "little church" in which the mystery of the Church of Christ is mirrored and given new life'* (FC, 86).

'Thanks to love within the family, the Church can and ought to take on a more homelike or family dimension, developing a more human and fraternal style of relationships' (FC, 64).

• What lessons from family life can we apply to the way our parish/diocese operates?

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