

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH
December 31, 2023

Gospel: (Luke 2:22-40)

The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted-and you yourself a sword will pierce-so that the thoughts of many may be revealed..." When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Reflection:

All the wonderful gifts of grace bestowed on the Holy Family did not preserve this family from hardship and suffering. These simple parents surely had their own apprehensions-"you yourself a sword shall pierce." Yet they responded faithfully and obediently. This is the interface of our own modern families and the Holy Family: as they did, we too all face challenges in responding to God faithfully and obediently. The holiness of a family is not dependent upon perfection or an easy road. Whether we are a traditional family or a single parent, whether we have biological or adopted or foster children or no children, whether we live in an expensive home or a subsidized rental unit makes no difference for living as a holy family. What makes the difference is believing and trusting in God, responding to both hardships and God's wonderful gifts of grace in fidelity and obedience. Trust in God's ways. You, too, are a holy family. (Living Liturgy, p. 28)

Words of Frederic:

"...A new blessing has come to me, the greatest joy, probably, it is possible to experience here below! **I am a father!**... Ah! What a moment that was when I heard the first cry of my child; when I beheld that little creature, but that immortal creature, which God has confided to me, who brought me so many delights and so many duties... We have called her Marie, which is her mother's name, as well as that of the powerful protectress to whose intercession we attribute this happy birth... How could I dare teach her lessons that I did not practice? Could God have found a kinder way of instructing me, of correcting me, and setting my feet on the road to heaven?" (Ramson, Praying with Frederic, p. 70-71)

Discussion: (*Share thoughts on the readings after a moment of silence*)

How has "God found the kindest way of instructing you, correcting you and setting your feet on the road to heaven" in your own "holy family", as Frederic's.

Closing Prayer:

With hopeful hearts we pray:

May our own "holy families" gather at the table of peace,

-to celebrate God's creative love in the human family

May the family of the Church gather at the table of the Eucharist,

-to celebrate our unity in the body and blood of Jesus

May the Vincentian Family gather at the table of the poor,

-to celebrate the presence of Christ among the lost and broken. Amen

