

Feast of the Holy Family / Sunday in the Octave of Christmas Year A

Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14

Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

James D. McBurney, O.S.A.

It is most appropriate that we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family during the Christmas season. Christmas is a time when families gather to exchange greetings and gifts with one another. For all of us, life begins in the family. The first significant relationships we form are with parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. Family gives us a sense of belonging. This feast provides us with the opportunity to reflect upon the gift and importance of the family.

In the second reading, St. Paul is calling the Colossians to the practice of Christian virtue. He specifically calls them to “put on” compassion, kindness, humility, and patience. Paul reminds them and us that these virtues constitute the foundation of Christian life. Do they not also say something to family life? The family is the place where love, support, and encouragement are meant to be given and received so that all members might grow to be the best that they can be. Yet we all realize the challenge of Paul’s words! Who of us could not be a little more kind and patient with one another? Taking on the virtues of which Paul speaks is not something that comes easily for most of us. We must make a choice to be kind, loving and forgiving. We have to decide to be kind to members of our families, neighbors, or coworkers, even when it seems that they are not kind to us.

Today’s Gospel highlights the importance of listening. Joseph was invited to listen to the message revealed to him in a dream. He seeks to protect the child Jesus from the wrath of Herod by departing for Egypt. In another dream, Joseph was told to have no fear about taking Mary for his wife. We, like Joseph, are invited to listen in faith to God’s plan for us. Listening is also important for quality family life. Have we not all at one time or another found ourselves talking with a brother, sister, mother or father and eventually saying to them: “Are you listening to me?” Yes, respectfully and attentively listening to one another in the family can, at times, be challenging!

Let us pray today for all families and ask God to bless our families. We pray especially for families divided by separation or divorce or the recent loss of a loved one. As Joseph protected his family from harm, we also pray that all families may be kept safe and that parents will create an environment in family life where children may know they are safe and loved.