

Holy Family Sunday (2012)

(Colossians 3:12-17, St. Luke 2:41-52)

“Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.”

In His omnipotent Providence, God has created three great institutions for the ordering of the societies in this world He has created. Those three great institutions are the Church, the Family and the State.

The Church is the foundation of this order. It is, as St. Paul calls it in 1 Timothy 3:15 *“the pillar and ground of the truth.”*

In Ephesians St. Paul states the Body of Christ, if not the whole of society, is built upon *“the foundation of the apostles (New Covenant Church) and prophets (Old Covenant Church), Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.”* The Church is the institution our Lord stated that even the *“gates of hell shall not prevail against.”*

In the State, when it functions properly, God has invested the power and authority to keep peace and order within societies and protect them from foreign invasions so the Church and Families can flourish.

The God-ordained role of government within a society, particularly a Christian society, is to preserve its peace and order through laws that are built upon God’s Law, and to be God’s agent in executing wrath upon those that rebel against that law and order, and the peace as God has established it.

Sadly, and to the decline and eventual destruction of many great nations (likely our own included), governments have failed to do their God-ordained responsibilities, and have done evil by establishing laws that disobey God’s Law. Such “institutional evil” brings heavy judgment upon a nation.

Still, despite the many failures of governments throughout history, Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 plainly declare God has still established the institution of the State, and as much as possible Christians should be obedient and submissive to, and supportive of it.

The third great institution God has created for the ordering of the world He has created is the Family.

If the Church is the foundation of this order and the State is its protector, the Family is its building blocks and sinews. Families are what make societies possible.

In the order of time, God instituted the Family first.

In Genesis 2:23, 24 Adam is quoted as saying about his wife Eve *“...This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be one flesh.”*

In this union of one man and one woman in the life-long sacramental bond of Holy Matrimony God has provided the means by which the society is established, built and stabilized.

Throughout Scripture God zealously guards this union. Our Lord’s teaching on marriage in St. Matthew 5:31, 32 and 19:3-9 is quite clear. In the latter of those passages He quotes from Genesis 2 and then adds *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

Divorce and “serial marriage” in Western Society has become accepted at a great cost. Western Society is breaking down at an alarming rate.

While divorce and remarriage are not “unpardonable” and some second marriages produce the kind of life-long results God desires of all marriages, as our Lord told the Pharisees *“from the beginning it was not so.”*

God’s intent for marriage is for one man and one woman to live in a sacramental marital bond for life. This must be our intent too.

Anyone entering into marriage with an attitude of *“Well if it doesn’t work out I’ll just...”* should remain single and chaste until the time their understanding of marriage is in tune with God’s intent and will for it.

Couples considering marriage must commit themselves to the motto: *“Divorce is not an option!”*

The high place God gives to marriage within His created order, and the great benefits it provides to society should cause the Church and the State to support, guard and assist it with great zeal.

Sadly, and to its shame and judgment, our government and many churches no longer do this.

Starting with “no fault” divorce in the 1980’s through today’s obsession with the complete equalization of what is called *“same-sex marriage,”* the State and many churches have become the enemies of the Family.

In doing so they have also become the enemies of God!

All one needs to do is read Eph. 5:22-33, where St. Paul compares the love relationship of husband and wife to that which exists between Christ and His Church, and we see that such a thing as “same sex marriage” is

preposterous. What it really is, is “same-sex fornication” which God calls an “*abomination*” in Leviticus 18:22, and “*vile*,” “*unseemly*” and “*reprobate*” in Romans 1.

Yet despite God’s clear condemnation of such relations, the State (including our own government) and many so-called churches both support and are assisting in the forced advancement of this abomination.

At first both requested, and now they demand, that same sex partnerships and unions be accepted on equal footing with what God has instituted in the eternal bond of Holy Matrimony between one man and one woman.

How long will God allow such evil to become further legalized and accepted in our society before He says “Enough!?” He has judged other nations and societies for it, why will He not judge ours?

In the teachings of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition we learn the importance and value God places on the institution of the Family. And in the Holy Family: St. Joseph, the Blessed Virgin Mary and our Lord Jesus, we are given the perfect example of a “holy family,” a family set apart for God’s exclusive use.

They show us that the primary duty of parents is to raise their children to know and love God and to live their lives according to His holy standard.

This is exemplified for us in the Gospel Lesson of their visitation to the Temple.

Traveling from Nazareth to Jerusalem in those days was a very difficult journey. The distance is 68 miles one way and would take at least 4 days to walk, and likely longer in a caravan such as the Holy Family traveled in.

As a self-employed carpenter St. Joseph could not take vacation time to cover the days for travel and the stay in Jerusalem. He surely lost money and maybe the business of some customers in order to observe the Feast.

It is likely many Jews used such reasons as excuses to not make that trip.

But such reasons did not stop the Holy Family from being obedient to God’s command to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. The priority of their lives was to be faithful to the Covenant God had made with His people through Abraham and Moses, and to teach their Son, our Lord Jesus (in His human nature), the way of faithfulness. They ordered their lives in a way where they kept the Feasts God had prescribed. Verse 42 of the Gospel states “*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.*” It was a priority for them, as I am sure keeping the Sabbath as a holy day was too. It was their custom.

Here we need to ask ourselves, what are our priorities and customs? How do we order our own lives?

In the way we order our lives what example do we set and teach our children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and god-children?

Do our own lives order and teach the order and priorities God’s Word sets, or what the world sets, and continually re-sets, on a devolving scale?

We must remember God holds *us* responsible for the faith-lives of children. The first responsibility for training up children in God’s way is laid at the feet of those adults that have most influence over them.

Imagine the seriousness on Jesus’ face when in St. Matt. 18 He said “*Woe to...whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me...*” As a parent I read that passage with great trepidation.

My brethren God has created three great institutions for this world.

He has created the Church as its foundation, the Family for its propagation, and the State to protect and defend the first two.

The soul of these institutions is the Family and Satan knows it. That is why it is constantly under attack.

Let us pray that God would strengthen Christian families. Let us pray for the end of the moral plague of same-sex “marriage” and every other means Satan uses to break down the institution of the family.

Let us fearlessly speak the truth in love about Satan’s covert strategies.

Moreover let us also follow the example of the Holy Family within our own families, teaching and ordering the lives of those children we have influence over the way St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary taught and ordered the life of their Holy Child, Jesus.

The Holy Family is not only holy because Jesus, the holy One, is part of it. It is also the Holy Family because St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary raised their Holy Son in a holy household submitted and obedient to the Holy Word of God.

The final verse of the Gospel Lesson states “*...Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.*” In His human nature Jesus was taught by His parents and from them He learned to be a child and a young man who was obedient and faithful to His Eternal Father’s Law and Commandments.

May we utilize the grace God has given us to make our families holy families too. **Amen.**