**Solemnity of the Holy Family – 2017**

December 30/31, 2017

Sir 3: 2-6, 12-14; Col 3: 12-21; Luke 2: 22-40

I have seen the effects of the world on family life, the social, economic, and political pressures that families experience in today’s world. I have also come to appreciate more and more as the years pass the wisdom of the Church’s teachings on family, i.e., the indissolubility of marriage; the union of a man and a woman; the blessings of children and openness to life; natural family planning; sacrificial love.

We all know that no family is perfect. WE are an imperfect people, in an imperfect world, using imperfect means, trying to become perfect. So, we have to be very understanding of others, and ourselves, and of our shortcomings, because we do not always get the results for which we hope. We live in a culture that no longer supports God’s family plan, just like the first Christians who lived in a world hostile to them in their time.

What is threatening marriage and family today is the idea that life, and love, and marriage, and family are all about “me.” The world wants us to think that what is important is fulfilling yourselves, knowing yourself, meeting your own needs, setting your own course in life, being assertive, defining yourself and being free of commitments. The world would say that what is true is what you decide is true. The world says you should be obligated to no one, and you should be free to do what you wish. The world essentially says you are your own god.

The world says that life and love and relationships are defined by me and my passions and desires, and when life or love or relationships do not meet my needs or my desires, then that life should be terminated, that love should die, and that relationship should end. That is the reason for the acceptance of abortion, divorce, euthanasia, and so-called “same-sex marriage” in our culture today.

All of this is contrary to God’s natural law, a law that is written in our very beings, a law everyone must acknowledge and obey if they are to be happy.

God has a plan, and we must know it. God shows us how to be a family; the world shows us how to be individuals.

What is God’ family plan?

In the Holy Family of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, God has given us a model for family life. God has shown us that family consists of a man and a woman coming together as complementary persons, and committing themselves for life in a sacrificial love for one another, uniting their lives as one, and in their physical union openly accepting children to be raise, nurtured, and taught God’s law.

God has made us in his image. He made us to be in relationship with each other, as he is in relationship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God made us dependent on each other, needing each other. God created us to be husbands and wives, children and parents. God made us this way so we would not live in isolation or loneliness. He made us male and female, and made that union holy. He made us to be deeply rooted in family.

We were created for someone else, to give ourselves to someone else. Ultimately, we are made for God, to be like him. This is why marriage is between a man and a woman who give themselves to each other. This is why a father and a mother given themselves to their children. This is why children obey and respect their parents, and love and care for them in their old age.

This is what marriage and family are all about, i.e., a man giving himself for life to a woman, and a woman to a man, in sacrificial love, so they may live abundantly, and together being open to life, new life to be welcomed, nurtured, and parented in the ways of God’s law.

Let us pray:

*O Jesus, give us the grace and understanding we so desperately need to be family, to be Christians in name and in truth, to strive to be families modeled after your Holy Family. May we always remember that we are made to be gifts to others, rooted in family. Bless all families who seek your care and protection. Mary, pray for us! St. Joseph, protect us!*