

Feast of the Holy Family - Year C 2006 -Lk 2:41-54

- Over the last twenty five years a movement has been slowly gaining strength in America.
- a. It has its roots in Evangelical Protestantism,
 - b. but it now has friends and supporters everywhere.
 - i. Politicians regularly consult its leaders,
 - ii. and political parties include it in their platforms.
 - iii. It has radio programs and television stations,
 - iv. whole churches designate themselves as members.
 - v. Even the Archdiocese has an office dedicated to its aims.
 - c. What is this powerful movement? It is the “pro-family” movement.
 - i. A movement dedicated to strengthening and protecting family life in America.
 - d. The pro family movement does so many things to support family life in America; because at its heart, it holds up an ideal of family life which we Catholics personify in the family of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, whom we call the Holy Family.
2. It is easy to see why such a movement would be so popular;
- a. For in a country
 - i. where the rate of children born out of wedlock stands at 30% of all births
 - ii. where the divorce rate has topped 50% of all marriages
 - iii. And where practically 100% of us know someone who has suffered at the hand of a father or a mother a sister or a brother.
 - iv. we know that family life is in need of support.
3. And yet in some circles the “pro-family” movement is *unpopular*,
- a. Precisely because it holds up the image of the Holy Family not merely as an ideal to be learned from, but as a blue print to be copied;
 - i. Implying that all families should be like the holy family;
(1) one mother - one father and children. - preferably several.
4. And while of course that would be nice, it is also the problem, for
- a. what happens when death strikes, and a partner is left single?
 - b. what happens the couple is infertile, and cannot have children?
 - c. what happens when life happens,
 - i. and all the things such as unplanned pregnancies and unexpected separations,
 - ii. infidelities and cruelties occur,
(1) marring the beautiful image of family life we are supposed to have?
5. What happens is that many people feel judged and do things which makes many in the pro family movement very uncomfortable.

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- a. Widowed partners often find new ones; but live with them without the benefit of marriage
 - b. Childless couples often seek to get pregnant using in vitro-fertilization and surrogate parents and all the other methods forbidden by the Church.
 - c. Divorced people civilly marry,
 - d. gay people enter civil unions,
 - e. all manner of families begin to appear,
 - f. None of them following the blueprint of the Holy Family.
6. Many people in the pro family movement are afraid of this development,
- a. saying that we are “redefining the family”
 - i. away from the Holy Family that God wants.
 - (1) And that this destroying America’s families.
7. And there is no doubt;
- a. family life is changing in America. Just look around.
8. But there is also no doubt that we are not alone in redefining family;
- a. for shockingly, Jesus did it first.
 - b. When as a young boy, he suddenly disappeared as his family was returning home from Jerusalem.
 - i. Mary and Joseph looked for him for three days, and when they finally found him the scolded him, telling him that they, his mother and father were looking for him;
 - ii. To which he responded, that they should have known that he would be in his father’s house - thus implying that he had another father, one that had nothing to do with Joseph;
 - (1) and that that was his real father.
 - iii. It was something he did later in the Gospels, when told that his mother and his brothers and sisters were looking for him.
 - (1) He responded pointing to the people who were listening to him preach; that anyone who does the will of my father in heaven is mother brother and sister to me.
 - (2) Thus implying that he had another family, one that had nothing to do with Mary and Joseph.
 - (a) and that that was his real family.
 - c. Again and again and again, Jesus redefined family;
 - d. and moreover he included in his family;
 - i. tax collectors and prostitutes and sinners, and even gentiles -
 - ii. people who would have never been accepted in families in Jesus day ,

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- iii. and lets be honest, at least in some cases, neither in ours.
- 9. But Jesus did not do this because he wanted to destroy traditional families,
 - a. any more than through his rejection of Mary and Joseph, he rejected his own.
- 10. No Jesus did this precisely because he wanted his family not to be limited by biology and parentage,
 - a. but to include all people who followed His Father's will,
 - b. by putting into practice what he taught and loving and serving each other as brothers and sisters.
- 11. This is something that we as Catholics once knew;
 - a. For why else would we have a Church
 - i. where childless celibates could be called **mother** and **father**,
 - ii. where young men and women take vows to live together in religious communities calling each other **brother** and **sister**,
 - iii. when young women who became nuns were called Christ's **brides**,
 - iv. and where all of us were taught to call the eternal God our **Father**, or literally, our daddy?
- 12. It is because Jesus' redefinition of family was remembered and carried on in the Church,
 - a. seeing the Holy Family
 - i. not as a blue print to be copied
 - ii. but as a community to be joined
 - b. That the Catholic Church has been able to find a place in for many different types of families throughout history,
 - c. and it is that redefinition which should make us work all the harder to help even more people find their place in it still.
 - d. Because make no mistake about it; there is no one more radical than Jesus when it comes to family.
 - i. Not because he wants to destroy it;
 - ii. ut precisely because he wants us all to be a part of it;
 - iii. brothers and sisters in his Holy Family.