



Newsletter – March 2021

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Commemorating the Family In the midst of COVID-19

Gospel reading on the Feast of The Holy Family on 27 December 2020 – **Gospel of Luke 2:22-40**

Beginning of the reading:

“When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

- Mary and Joseph were religious people: “observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord”

It is important for us to listen to what the Word of God and the teachings of the Church teach us about God, about men...

- They entrusted the new born child to God as the law requests i.e. “every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord”

The act of consecration helps us realize that our life finds its meaning in God, that we belong to God. We have been created by God. We don't have life by ourselves... Our life is a gift from God. A child doesn't belong to his/her parents but to God...even if the parents have the privilege and dignity to cooperate with God to give birth to a child...

We read in the **Book of Genesis (Gen 1:27-28)**

‘God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.’

- If children don't belong to their parents, it's part of the dignity of the parents to be co-creator with God in giving life to their children...

The origin of all life is God himself. And as co-creator, we are called to respect, to protect and to promote human life, from conception to death. Created in the image of God, we believe indeed that human life is sacred.

- When we are told to "fill the earth and subdue it", the purpose is not to exercise our power and use others and Creation for our selfish interests, but to cooperate in God's life-giving plan. Our dignity and the source our joy is inherent in our call to cooperate in God's work... and not in our will to exercise power and selfishness.
- Joseph is an example for us: despite the fact that the child Jesus was conceived before he was with Mary, he took Mary as his wife and took care of the child even if he wasn't his biological father. We can easily imagine how difficult it might have been for him to make the decision. But he chose to trust and to believe. He had a dream and saw an angel in his dream who told him:

"Do not be afraid... The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'" (Mt 1:23).

For Joseph, it was enough to believe and to take his responsibility as a father. What a beautiful example...

- We also read in today's Gospel reading that Mary and Joseph brought "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons" to the Temple of Jerusalem to be offered "in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord". It tells us that the Holy Family wasn't rich. Indeed, they brought the offering that the law prescribed for the poor. The offering for the rite of purification of giving birth is prescribed by the law. Normally, the mother has to bring a lamb, but as we can read in the book of Leviticus 12:8: "If, however, she cannot afford a lamb, she may take two turtledoves or two pigeons."

It means that the Holy Family was poor. Nevertheless, it was chosen to welcome the Son of God. So, poverty is not an obstacle to God's presence among us. We can be poor but rich of God and full of joy, like Mary, who gave us this beautiful prayer:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord

and my spirit exults in God my saviour;

because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid." (Luke 1:46)

We learn the secret of God's joy in not in our possessions or wealth but in our openness to God's grace.

To rejoice like Mary and the Holy Family, we just have to open our heart to God, to believe in Him and in his goodness, to entrust our life to him, to consecrate our lives to Him.

Whatever we are going through, we are called to pray to God and to entrust to Him everything. And He will show us a way to overcome our difficulties.

For that, it's good to look up to the Holy Family and to learn from them. Even if they were blessed by God and full of joy, it doesn't mean that everything was easy...

- while Mary was pregnant, they had to leave from Nazareth and go to Bethlehem because of the census;

- they couldn't find any accommodation in Bethlehem and Mary had to give birth in a stable;
- after the birth of the Child, they had to flee to Egypt to protect the child from King Herod who wanted to kill him ...;
- Luke 2:41-50 - "Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it... Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions... They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us?'"
Jesus replied "'Why were you looking for me?' 'Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?'" But they did not understand what he meant."
I'm not sure whether the answer of Jesus helped them to calm down...

In conclusion we could ask: What enabled the Holy Family to keep hope and courage despite all these trials?

Maybe 2 things:

- First, their faith: their faith in God... that God will never abandon them, whatever they have to go through, they trusted in God, that God was among them, even if they couldn't see Him...
- Second, their love, their love for God and their love for one another... God is love. He created us out of love and is waiting for our response to his love. Our love for Him gives us hope and courage to overcome our trial. And it is the same for our love for each other... Our love for each other will help us overcome our difficulties.

Jesus taught us that his love is stronger than everything, even stronger than death. That is why the Gospels are good news. Jesus shows us a way which help us overcome suffering and death. That way of Jesus is a way of love and that way gives us life, eternal life.

But as we don't really know how to love like Jesus, we need to learn. We need to learn from Jesus, from the Holy Family and from the saints...

St. Francis de Sales: "A sad saint is a sorry saint."

Holiness and happiness go hand in hand. But to grow in holiness and happiness, we have to learn how to love like Jesus.

And **the family** is a good place to learn how to love. It's not only the good place, but the **first place** where we can put into practice what we have learned from Jesus and the Holy Family about love...

St. John Paul II tells indeed in *The Family in the Modern World*, 64:

"Another task for the family is to form persons in love and also to practice love in all its relationships, so that it does not live closed in on itself, but remains open to the community, moved by a sense of justice and concern for others, as well as by a consciousness of its responsibility towards the whole of society"

The Family is a good school where we can learn how to love. But because it's not easy to know how to love and because we are a bit blind, we need to be taught... And the Holy Family can teach us a lot about love...

After contemplating and meditating on the life of the Holy Family, the apostles and Church itself can also teach how to love...

During COVID-19, did we use the time of grace to form our faith?

Even if:

- We were deprived of glorifying God through our work.
- We were deprived of social interactions.
- We are deprived of the Sacraments.

God is always with us... through His Word.

REFLECTION

SEE

1. We are in Phase 3 of the Covid-19 situation in Singapore. How is my family faring now?
2. If my family is now facing challenges, what are the Causes and Consequences within my family?

JUDGE

1. What can I/we gather from the talk on Holy Family given by our Chaplain Father Dominique on 27 December 2020?

ACT

1. Name some actions I/We am/are going to do to ensure that our family is like the Holy Family.
2. As a CFMSM member, how can I assist other families who may need help?
3. As a Movement, how can we bring the message of the Holy Family to all families in the Movement?

Announcement

CFMSM Annual General Meeting 2021

All CFMSM members are invited to the AGM for Year 2021:

Date: Saturday, 6 March 2021

Time: 2.30pm to 5.00pm

Venue: CANA, The Catholic Centre

Level 2, Emma and Flora rooms

55 Waterloo Street

Singapore 187954



Your vote counts.