

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
 December 31, 2017  
 St. Agnes Church

Today, our minds and hearts are drawn to the importance of family life.  
 We are called to affirm and celebrate  
 and if necessary rediscover and recommit to the value of family.  
 Jesus, Mary and Joseph as a family  
 give witness, they provide an example of God's grace in action:  
 a grace that sustains in troubled times;  
 a grace that heals and strengthens and provides hope when the future appears dim.  
 It is questionable whether Mary and Joseph would have survived their situation  
 had Jesus not been God's Son.  
 It is just as questionable whether our families will survive  
 if Jesus is not a central part of our lives as husbands, and wives, children, brothers and sisters.

Today, family life is threatened in many ways:  
 war, poverty, disease, hatred between cultures and races.  
 Here in the United States, family life is threatened by  
 competition intensified by rampant consumerism,  
 easy divorce laws, the influence of mass media,  
 a lack of moral and ethical character, a growing refusal to love God,  
 excessive individualism, anguish about an uncertain future,  
 and rapidly changing social structures.

We can allow history to take whatever course it chooses  
 (most likely, the path of least resistance),  
 we can passively sit by and hope for the best.  
 Or we can actively and consciously confront what contributes to the disintegration of family life,  
 actively crusade for the good of family as part of God's order of things.

Not too long ago, someone questioned my optimism.  
 They said, "Msgr. Don, just give up,  
 you're wasting your time.  
 Stop fighting the influence of the culture.  
 The Church is so out of touch....it's going to lose...the culture's going to win."

As I pondered this comment my heart became sad.  
 For it indicated to me that the person who said this,  
 a life-time, practicing Catholic  
 ...it indicated to me that this person had little faith in the Catholic faith  
 and in the message of Jesus Christ.  
 This persons seems to have surrendered....  
 relinquished the course of his life and his family's life to the culture.

Personally I refuse to do so.

I do want to contribute to the good of society  
and I'll be the first to admit that I enjoy the benefits of affluency,  
but it is my intention to avoid cooperating with forces  
that are contrary to Christian family life.

The stability and sanctity of family life is being challenged on many sides.  
As individuals, we cannot take on the culture by ourselves.  
But we can choose to do those things that foster and strengthen family relationships:  
time is a wonderful gift we can give to our families;  
not only time but love, communication, sacrifice, and investment.  
We can stand in solidarity with others who promote family values.

As a Church, as the Body of Christ,  
we can meet the challenges that diminish family life.  
We can call the culture to task  
confront society with the truth of the Gospel.

Recent popes have sought to inspire Catholics throughout the world  
to take up the mission of preserving and promoting the value of family.  
They have encouraged Catholics to support social programs  
and civil legislation conducive to family life.  
They have urged Catholic parents to adopt orphan children  
and provide foster care.

Family is a vocation of love and of service to life.  
It is the place where fundamental attitudes regarding the goodness of life are taught.  
The good of society is clearly bound to the good of family.  
The survival of society is dependent on the survival of the family.

In honor of this feast day, the Feast of the Holy Family  
let us make a pledge, a resolution.  
Let us re-dedicated ourselves to the renewal of family life.  
Let us trust that in God and in the Gospel  
questions will be answered  
anxieties will be alleviated  
hope will be reborn  
and family relationships will be healed and become strong....  
that being together like Jesus, Mary and Joseph will bring us the happiness we seek.

Today's Prayer: "O Lord, help us to meet the demands of family life with generosity, to bear our  
day-to-day duties with faithfulness, and to appreciate the sacrifices made to promote family  
togetherness and comfort. Give us a new vision of what family life is meant to be according to  
Your created order of things. In our families, help us to be Christ to and for one another.  
Amen!"