

## Feast of the Holy Family Year A

In a monastery lived six monks who were getting old. It did not appear that they were going to make it to the next generation as no one seemed to want to join their community. One day an hermit stopped by. He was a man of great holiness. The leader, the abbot, discussed these problems with the hermit and the hermit said to him, "One of you in your community is the chosen one of God." The abbot pondered this message and shared it with the community. The community also pondered this message and they wondered who it could be. *Maybe so and so, maybe me.* They started being more careful in how they treated one another. They took greater pride in their work because maybe they were serving the chosen one so it should be the best they could do. When people on the outside started to see the way the monks treated each other and how they made their place beautiful, others wanted to join them and once again their monastery was full.

Today as we look at the Holy Family, and that they are called to be our model, we might think that they are an unfair model because Jesus was perfect (He was God), Mary was without sin and Joseph was a good, holy and virtuous man. So how can they be a model for such broken people as us? They can be because they show us that we are all called to Heaven. Each member of the Holy Family knew where the other was called to go and helped them get there.

We must know that our families are called to go to Heaven as well. But what we don't know is that our families are the gymnasium of holiness. If we walked into a gym and we did not recognize what the machines were for, we would be either curious or scared but we would not profit from those machines. If someone put us on one of those machines we might be angry at the work they caused in our life and resist training because we didn't know it was training. This is a good example of the family: if we do not know that the family is there to cause us holiness we might resent them. We might try to avoid them. But now we know they are there to annoy us and shape us and build good boundaries and teach us patience. We can thank God for them.

In the community of St Therese, there was a very grumpy nun. She was never happy and would often bring down the spirits of the community. St Therese decided that she would make a special effort to see Jesus in this nun who grated the nerves of everyone else. She prayed to love her and to be joyful whenever she saw her. She managed it so well, in fact, that this nun was surprised by the response of Sister Therese. One day the grumpy nun asked Sister Therese, "Why are you always so happy to see me?" St Therese said, "It is because I see Jesus in you."

Isn't the mystery of a holy family that they see God in each other? Not because He is necessary obvious through a person's actions, but I tell you it is a marvelous thing to see God in your enemy. It is the call of each and everyone here to be holy, meaning set apart for a divine purpose. This is what sets the Holy Family apart - they knew what their lives were for which was to create holiness in each other and to see Jesus in others.

Do we think of our call to holiness to see Jesus in others? Is there a person who we find it really hard to see Jesus in right now? What are we doing to see that Christ is in others? I affirm it is a powerful thing to strive to see Jesus in the face of others, to know they have a call.