

## The Domestic Church

The Feast of the Holy Family- Luke 2:41-52

The feast of the Holy Family is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on this week's gospel, but also to look at the Church's renewed emphasis on the domestic church. Simply put, the domestic church is everything that has to do with family life and God's will.

St. Luke sets this story twelve years into Jesus' life, highlighting in his opening words that the Holy Family were people of religious habit. They celebrated the feast of Passover in Jerusalem each year. They obviously celebrated with extended family and friends, as St. Luke points out that upon their departure, Jesus' parents thought he was in the caravan **with relatives and acquaintances**. Their domestic life was wrapped around their Judaic worship of God in the midst of community.

As family, we are to be people of religious habit. That means we, as parents and grandparents, are to live in community with one another, raising children, with parents as the ones who have the primary responsibility to help children develop a relationship with God through worship, prayer and teaching of the faith.

Religious habit is about conversation and practice of faith. Prayer before meals, prayer upon rising or at the end of the day are essential elements for developing religious habits. Helping children understand that our lives are dependent on God for everything helps them grow to love God and others. Gratitude and thanksgiving are hallmarks of a holy family setting up a practice of taking time each day to be aware of the many blessings bestowed on us by God. From these daily practices of prayer and gratitude rise the response of worship. Attending Mass each week helps form the understanding that the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of our faith.

Archbishop Jackels likes to point out that parents and grandparents must have conversations with children and grandchildren today that ask more of the child than, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" We need to be willing to listen as well. We, as a Catholic community, must ask and discuss with our children what they think they are called to be. What vocation is God (not the world) asking you to become? Are you called to married life, religious life, priesthood or dedicated single life? This is different than a job.

In the gospel today, Jesus has stayed behind in Jerusalem, a choice unknown to his parents. He wanted to spend time in the company of the religious leaders and scholars. When confronted by his mother with the question: **"Son, why have you done this to us?"** Jesus answers **"Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"** Jesus is declaring that his life's work will not be their choice but rather the choice of his Father in heaven. **"But they did not understand what he said to them."** Although Jesus is growing into his Divine Role as Savior, **"He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them, and his mother kept all these things in her heart."**

This is a great example of how a vocation, within the context of our own holy families, can take root and grow. By helping our children understand that their vocation is a call from God, we have an opportunity to allow them to hear God's voice in the midst of the domestic church, and allow them to grow as Jesus did, who **"advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man."**

Merry Christmas!

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