

HOMILY – FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY – 30 DECEMBER 2017

Family life, what is there to say about it today? In a sense, it is very easy to find fault with family life, to be critical and negative. We, perhaps, can all think of some aspect of our own family that needs fixing. My mum is ill, my dad and my sister are not speaking, my brother never visits.

But I say this to you, treasure your family, harness all your energy to protect and nurture your own family. May the family home be the crucible of divine love. Yes, being family is a constant challenge with the wider world imposing its own laws, regulations and demands. May your family home be an oasis of love, a shrine of prayer, a shelter from the 'storms of life'. In theatre and the arts, we hear of all sorts of models of family, The Waltons, The Simpsons, The Broons, The Royal Family, Mrs Browns Boys. Many are satirical and together with the soaps, they often portray the family in a dysfunctional way, for our entertainment, but also worryingly, to our suggested decline and erosion of our moral values. The implication being there is no universal ethic of the family.

I encourage you all today to rise up to the vocation you are given I the family, wife, husband, children. To seek to protect this greatest vocation of bringing up your children to be the 'bedrock' of our future, in covenant with the Living God. All families have problems, don't leave it to others to find the solution.

Husbands, value your wives, love them constantly. Listen well to your spouse. Teach your children to respect their parents. Don't spoil them, encourage them to be creative and to help in the home, take turns to put the bin out. Don't say yes to everything your wife tells you, she does like a man who stands up for himself, now and then.

Wives, love your husbands in all the ways that true love can be expressed. Care for the home, be devoted to your children but always leave time for your husband. Don't get hooked on social media, talk to each other and pray with each other. Keep phone calls short, don't spoil the children. Be honest about the shopping, see yourself as an equal.

Children, be respectful of your parents. Enjoy being young, learn to play. Don't be selfish, don't talk back. Stay away from the social media, say your night prayers faithfully and love Jesus, especially in the Holy Mass. Listen carefully to your grandparents, don't tell lies! Don't be jealous.

Families, look after your elderly parents and try to look after them well at home. Don't neglect them in old age, give them their dignity and love at all times.

Health and happiness comes before personal ambition. The truth I have come to realise is that most employers don't care about your marriage, your children, your family needs or your religious beliefs. Some will even blackmail you into spending even less time at home. It wont even bother them is working causes the break up of your marriage, so try, if possible, to find a job that protects your family.

So be strong, love and protect the family and nurture it with your faith in God. The Catholic church is not merely a collection of individuals, it is the gathering of many families at Holy Mass on a Sunday. It is good for the family to pray together, so it is good to come to Mass together, Mum, Dad and the children. Through our shared Baptism, we belong to God's family, The Church. You, therefore, are spiritual brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers to each other. No longer strangers but now a parish family.

On this feast of the Holy Family, let us remind ourselves that Jesus was born into a family, with a devoted mother and an adopted father, Joseph, who is truly a saintly man. Jesus spent his first 30 years living under the authority of Mary and Joseph, learning to be a carpenter and being obedient to Jewish laws and customs.

God the Father therefore affirms the importance of the family, for the formation and nurturing of childhood, to have, if possible, a loving father figure and mother. This is in keeping with natural law. Childhood should be free from the legal imposition of “two mothers” or “two fathers”. Yes, in family life, many single parents do fantastic work in bringing up their family but in the ideal world, if possible, children should be formed by a mum and a dad. It is not ‘politically correct’ to say this anymore, in public, but it is the truth according to Holy Scripture and tradition. It is interesting to note that the island of Bermuda has recently overturned the Supreme Court ruling allowing same sex marriage and reverting to the traditional definition of marriage between a man and a woman. It should be noted that two thirds of countries in Europe have not accepted same sex marriage. So, let us not be afraid to stand by our faith, our traditions and our belief in the traditional family.

Yes, all of humanity must be treated with dignity, love and respect but remember that showing love isn't always about giving individuals what they want. True love is about sacrificing yourself for the greater good of universal moral principles, ratified by the Holy Family.

God Bless you all. God Bless our families.