

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

Today the Church celebrates what I think is one of its most important feast days: the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

One of the defining characteristics of our Christian faith is the fact that we do not only have a one-to-one relationship with God. By this I mean that although we always should have a personal relationship with God that is person to person; this is not the only form of our relationship to God. We also relate to God as a people, as a collective, as shown by the numerous examples in Holy Scripture in which God acts to save not just individual persons, but the entire community of people that God has made His own. The Holy Scriptures not only give us accounts of the saving power of God in action to save His people, but they also relate how the people of God come together to praise, thank, and worship God. If necessary, a single person may be the people of God in a particular place and time. However, this would be very unusual. In the normal course of events every believer in Christ in a particular place and time should come together and act as the people of God; strengthening and encouraging each other to deepen each other's own unique personal relationship with God, and reinforcing their individual faith through group prayer, worship, and holy works.

This is a wonderful high-level analysis of how a Christian people should act. Yet, how does it work in practice? After all, most of us struggle to associate with large groups of people on any sort of regular basis. Fortunately for us as Christians we do not have to try to learn how to worship with or pray with or act with large groups of a hundred or a thousand people. Instead, we start off by learning to be part of the people of God within our families. It is within the family that we learn to act toward each other with charity and kindness. It is within the family that we learn to pray to God. It is within the family that we learn to relate to God as a group, as a people. It is within the family that we learn how to come together to worship God. The family is the school of the Christian people. The place in which we learn to act and live as a Christian people.

Since the family is so important to our learning how to be a part of the Christian people; God has given to us the great example of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as a model for family life and a source of continuous encouragement to us here and now. We look to the Holy Family as described for us in the Gospels and see their obvious care and love for each other and seek to emulate those qualities in our own lives. Furthermore, knowing that the Holy Family is most certainly a continued part of the Christian people (for its members are not separated from us) we ask Joseph and Mary to intercede for us with their son Jesus Christ that our own families may be strengthened and that we might be encouraged to remain true to God forever.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff
Pastor