

Father O'Connor's Homily for 28 December 2025
Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph-A

Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14
Colossians 3: 12-17
Matthew 2: 13-15, 19-23

Today we celebrate a very warm feast – the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. And this Feast of the Holy Family, during this Christmas season, invites us to reflect on our own homes and family life.

Some time ago, **Reader's Digest** carried “a family quiz.” Here are three of the questions: 1) If, on a TV show, a teenager kissed their parents good night, would your children consider this normal? 2) If you were reading in one room, would your children come in and sit with you? 3) Have your children ever told you that they want to have a family just like theirs when they get married?

All three of these questions involve the whole family at the most basic level of family life: the love level. Let's take closer look at this level.

One of Bob Hope's favorite jokes was about his love for his friend, Bing Crosby. He said: “There's nothing I wouldn't do for Bing Crosby, and there's nothing he wouldn't do for me. But that's the trouble. We spend our lives doing nothing for each other.”

Bob Hope's point is a good one. In family life it is so easy to take each other's love for granted. Perhaps we rarely express our love in a verbal or visible way. For example, when was the last time that you told a family member, in a conversation or in writing, that you loved them?

In his book, **My Father, My Son**, Dr. Lee Salk describes an interview with Mark David Chapman, the convicted killer of Beatle John Lennon. Chapman says, “I don't think I ever hugged my father. He never told me he loved me. I needed emotional love and support. I never got that.”

Asked about how he would treat a son, if he ever had one, Chapman says, “I would hug my son and kiss him... and just let him know... he could trust me and come to me... and I would tell him that I loved him.”

Dr. Salk ends his book with this advice to parents and to children: “Don't be afraid of your emotions, of telling your father or your mother, or your son or your daughter that you love them and that you care. Don't be afraid to hug and kiss them. Don't wait until the death-bed to realize what you have missed.”

Ann Landers received a letter from a mother, asking her at what age parents should stop kissing their children and saying “I love you” to each other. Ann Landers gave the mother a one-word answer: “Never!”

Shortly afterward, Ann Landers received a letter from a father. He told her: “A few weeks ago I kissed my son for the first time and told him that I loved him. Unfortunately it was at the funeral home. My son had taken his own life.”

The father continued: “The greatest regret of my life is that I kept my son at arm’s length. I believed that it was not manly to show my son affection. I now sadly regret my ignorance and stupidity.”

What is true of fathers and sons is also true of fathers and daughters, mothers and daughters, mothers and sons, and brothers and sisters.

It is not hard to imagine Jesus, who cried at the tomb of his friend, Lazarus, embracing His mother, Mary, and saying, “Mom, I love you.”

It is not hard to imagine Jesus, who told how the father and son embraced in His parable about the Prodigal Son, hugging Joseph and saying, “Dad, I love you.”

Today’s Scripture readings for the Feast of the Holy Family pose a very important question to think about: “How well are we each contributing to the love level in our own family life?”

We are so blessed to have the prayers, the love and the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Holy Family, to embrace us and help us all along the way.

Let us listen again to today’s Opening Prayer – and keep its meaning in our hearts:

“O God, who were pleased to give us the shining example of the Holy Family, graciously grant that we may imitate them in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity, and so, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal rewards. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.”