

**2020 Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph**  
**Gen 15:1-6; 17:3-5, 15-16; 21:1-7; Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19**  
**Luke 2:22-40**

**1. There is a sort of Liturgical conjunction of stars today with the Feast of the Holy Family and the Feast of St. John** falling on the same day. The Liturgical firmament shines with greater radiance on our secular world. Furthermore, all three readings are marked by a narrative style – each telling recounting a story, the **work of grace and honor and honesty** in the lives of real people. Each of our human family represented among us today can recall **a struggle with honor, honesty and grace in the lives of our parents, siblings and ourselves.**

**2. The Holy Family's biography is particularly gripping** because its roots are so deep in the human and divine soil of the Scriptures. It is for example, stamped by the honesty and weakness of Abraham. Impatient with God's promises, he listened to the voice of Sarah instead of God's. **Like Adam, he destroyed the peace of his household by his own lack of faith.** He complicated the line of covenant succession with the birth of Ishmael: "Oh that Ishmael may live in your sight!" he says. These words follow right after God's promise to him: "I will give you a son by her!" In the end Abraham will have to face the pain of his broken fatherhood, when he sends Hagar away but not without the reassurance of God, "I will make a nation of the slave woman also." (Gen 21: 13). **All our descendants are blessed when our fathers and mothers bring their children into their relationship with Jesus Christ, the Saviour.**

**3. The Holy Family's lineage is entwined into Sarah's life too.** When the three visitors arrive at Abraham's tent to announce the conception of Isaac, Sarah, listening in the tent laughs, "After I have grown old and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure"(Gen 18:

12)? **The human realism of Sarah does not escape us.** Mary would ask a similar question, "How can this be since I am a virgin?" But neither does the faith hidden in Sarah's response escape the author of Hebrews, "By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11). **Family life is totally transformed and made miraculous when faith is allowed to have first place in decisions and intentions.**

**4. Mary and Joseph inherit this honesty, realism and faith of their ancestors.** And our Lord Jesus elevates the very law he promulgated by Moses to an even higher place in family life. We sang at Lauds today, "Jesus went down to Nazareth and was obedient to them" (Lk 2:51). Jesus brings to his parents an unheard of honor. **God himself honors them!** And as if to offer us the deeper motivation of Jesus to this same patrimony of faith, the Scripture reading at Lauds was: "Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be prolonged and it may go well with you" (Dt. 5:16). Joseph and Mary, like Simeon and Ana, finished everything required of them according to the law of the Lord (Lk 2:39). **Their hearts and their lives were encompassed by the grace of obedience to the will of God in everything.**

**5. God has made the human family a miraculous sanctuary of life and grace** whenever parents and children safeguard the patrimony of honor, honesty and faith. That first Christmas in the cave of Bethlehem, was in many ways, very much like ours. **They were all alone, with very few visitors.** The world was busy with other things-yet the great mystery of God's Fatherhood was becoming visible in Mary and Joseph. God's Fatherhood is the source of both human fatherhood and motherhood. It befores incarnated in human motherhood and fatherhood but must be trained by

honesty, honor and faith to experience the love Mary and Joseph united to Jesus, the Holy Family.

**6. On Dec 23 we celebrated the feast of Paula Elisabeth Cerioli** (1816-1865). When she founded the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family and Congregation of the Fathers and Brothers of the Holy family, she had already lost her four children and her husband at the age of 39. When her last child, Carlo, was dying, he said to her, "Mama do not cry for my approaching death, because God will give you many other children." (PE Cerioli, *Rules*, in "Opera Omnia", vol. I, Martinengo - BG, 2002, p. 211). In her apostolate she sought to rear the most neglected and derelict of poor children and **she took the Holy Family as her model and guide.**

One of the things she taught her sisters to do was a lesson in affectivity. The Holy Family teaches us that both Mary and Joseph had to learn how to renounce their own style and capacities for affection, and in a personal way to re-appropriate what God what wanted to give them for Jesus. Herein lies the true self emptying of parents and formators whose personalities and ways of acting and being can become obstacles instead of bridges of grace, honesty and honor.

The Eucharist gives us a stunning illustration of Jesus' method. Let Jesus do now for us what he did for Mary and Joseph, to penetrate our body mind and spirit with his body blood, soul and divinity to make the Church into one Holy Family.