

Holy Family of Nazareth Pray for Us

During the time between Thanksgiving, starting with “Black Friday,” the secular world enters into a frenzied period of buying as its way of preparing for Christmas. Hence television inundates us with commercials trying to give us great ideas for that “perfect gift” for someone. You will probably notice a commercial which has been played for many a Christmas season: A horse drawn sleigh glides over the snow covered road as in the background you hear instrumental music from the popular Christmas song, “I’ll be home for Christmas.” The music ends as the sleigh arrives at its destination: a country home ablaze with Christmas lights and a lighted candle in the window.

This commercial, put out by the Miller Brewing Company, reminds us that, besides all the buying, Christmas is a time for families to get together (as the instrumental music reminds us). College and university students will travel home and people will often travel a long distance so that on this occasion the extended family can come together and experience the love and togetherness that only a family can provide.

As part of our Christmas celebrations, we will see either in a church or wherever it hasn’t been outlawed, a Christmas nativity scene: the baby Jesus in the manger being adored by the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, the Magi from the East, the poor shepherds, the various animals gazing upon their creator and a host of angels hovering above in adoration and proclaiming the “Good News” of His coming.

While this scene brings very comforting sentiments, it also reminds us of an essential truth of our Faith: that Almighty God chose the venue of the **family** to inaugurate His plan of redemption and salvation for humanity. He could have chosen a more awe-inspiring stylistic approach. Indeed, the contemporary people of that time were longing for a superhero type Messiah to appear literally from nowhere, free them from Roman domination and re-establish the earthly Davidic kingdom. In other words, an approach that would have been a headline grabber. Instead, a very humble, low-key scene in which the child’s real identity is known to only a few especially chosen beforehand by Almighty God. True love and humility go hand-in-hand. God becomes one of us in order to free us.

The Holy Family of Nazareth reminds us of the centrality of the family in God’s plan of salvation for us. The Devil knows this too, which is why the family today is under such demonic assault.

Sr. Lucia of Fatima has said that the final battleground between God and Satan will be over the family: an assertion backed up by numerous mystics (all Church approved).

We have obviously entered into that “final battle.” Its particulars and how it will unfold are known to God alone. We are to have faith: the outcome is certain. The Blessed Mother will have a decisive role in that outcome.

We should remember that this war against the family didn’t just start recently. It began with Christ’s birth. Satan had back then, as he does today, his “useful idiots.”



Adoration of the Magi: Detail of the flight into Egypt (1423) ~Gentile da Fabriano

One of them was King Herod. Knowing that his (Satan) domination of earth was in grave jeopardy, Satan made use of King Herod to try to kill the child. An angel tells St. Joseph to take the Blessed Mother and the baby Jesus to Egypt for safety and to remain there until told otherwise. Two beautiful Christmas legends highlight both Satan's attempt to kill baby Jesus and God's saving action triumphing.

The first story concerns St. Dismas, known to us as the "Good Thief." According to the story Dismas did not meet Jesus for the first time when they both hung on their crosses at Calvary. When St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother were on their way to Egypt, they were waylaid by robbers. One of the robber's chiefs wanted to murder them at once and to steal their little store of goods. But something about the baby Jesus went straight to Dismas' heart, for Dismas was one of these robbers. He refused to allow any harm to come to Jesus or St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother. He looked at Jesus and said, "*O most blessed of children, if ever there comes a time for having mercy on me, then remember me, and forget not this hour.*" So, as the story goes, Jesus and Dismas met again at Calvary, and Dismas on the cross found forgiveness and mercy for his soul.

In the second story, when the Holy Family was on its way to Egypt, as evening came they were weary and sought refuge in a cave. It was very cold, so cold that the ground was white with hoar frost. A little spider saw the little baby Jesus, and recognizing his Creator, wished so much that he could do something to keep him warm in the cold night. He decided to do the only thing he could and spin his web across the entrance of the cave, to make, as it were, a curtain there.

Along the path came a detachment of Herod's soldiers, seeking infant boys to kill, in order to carry out Herod's bloodthirsty command. When they came to the cave they were about to burst in to search it, but their captain noticed the spider's web, covered with the white hoar frost and stretched right across the entrance to the cave. "*Look at the spider's web there,*" he said, "*it is quite unbroken and there cannot possibly be anyone in the cave for anyone entering would certainly have torn the web.*"

So the soldiers passed on, and left the Holy Family in peace, because a little spider had spun his web across the entrance to the cave. This is the origin of the custom of putting tinsel on our Christmas trees, for the glittering tinsel streamers stand for the spider's web, white with hoar frost, stretched

across the entrance of the cave on the way to Egypt.

Two very lovely Christmas stories, but remember, they illustrate an important point. Satan recognized his danger and immediately took action to destroy the Holy Family. But he lost there as he will lose this current battle also.

The Holy Family of Nazareth reminds us that the family is the basis for both the Church and society. It's often referred to as the *Domus Ecclesiae* – the Church in miniature or in its most basic form. The divinity present in the Holy Family (Jesus the Son of God) reminds us of an essential truth: the family comes from God. It is **NOT** a social construct. The Creation story in the book of Genesis recounts Almighty God creating the family by bringing Adam and Eve together and saying that the "*two shall become one flesh.*" That alone shows why there is no such thing as same-sex "marriage" (despite what the courts or any political body state). It is impossible for two members of the same sex to become "one flesh." After bringing them together Almighty God tells Adam and Eve to "*be fruitful and multiply*" (another impossibility for a same-sex "union"). The love that exists between husband and wife in marriage results in the bringing forth of a new life. Thus they continue God's work of creation which, as Scripture tells us, is **GOOD**. Therefore, to refer to a baby as a "punishment" is simply arrogant defiance of Almighty God.

On that note: in the prayers and hymns of the Maronite liturgy during the season of the Glorious Birth of our Lord, constant reference is made (during the Sundays of Announcement) to St. John the Baptist and Our Lord in the wombs of St. Elizabeth and the Blessed Mother. "*O hidden and exalted Lord Jesus Christ, you came down from heaven and dwelt in the womb of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. You visited John, your forerunner, while he was still in his mother's womb.*" Other similar examples could be given. Remember, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Second Person of the Blessed Trinity spent nine months in the **womb** of the Blessed Mother. Was He a "punishment"? Was He simply the "products of conception"? This is why the vocation of motherhood is so sublime and exalted. Our current cultural-Marxist anti-culture scorns motherhood (especially mothers who choose raising their children over a career) and reduces it to a "lifestyle choice" (and a limited one at

that). Nonetheless, Almighty God chose to become one of us, spending nine months in the womb of the Blessed Mother and being raised in a family.

So as we enjoy the love and warmth of family get-togethers during this season, may they, along with the scenes of the Nativity and the Holy Family, remind us of

the great gift of the family. Let us invoke their protection during these times of increased demonic attack on the family, always knowing that God will always give us the graces necessary to live out this vocation.

