

“*I’ll Be Home for Christmas*” is one of my favorite Christmastime songs, and the sentiments touch the hearts of so many. At Christmastime travelers come from near and far to get home to their loved ones. Christmastime is a time to gather with family and friends—and feel “at home.” This year, with the pandemic, we have been restricted in our gatherings, but let our current situation deepen our desire to be “at home” with family.

The Feast of the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—is a blessing on all family life. Few people would argue against the value of good families. Jesus was born into a good family—a loving mother, a faithful and righteous father, with an extended family circle.

The Holy Family in Nazareth shows us that the home is the heart of the community of faith. Love was brought to perfection in their home through the love of Mary and Joseph for God, for each other, for Jesus, for their neighbors, for the Jewish community. It was in their home that Jesus was nurtured, was taught the faith, and experienced the faith being lived by Mary and Joseph. It was through worship in the synagogue that Jesus heard the Scriptures read and explained, and experienced the larger community of the faithful, God’s family. Too often we forget that Jesus was nurtured in his faith in his home.

The family home is called the “domestic church.”

Our Catholic Catechism teaches: the family is *“the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society.”* (CC #2207)

Families provide children with a sense of belonging and a unique identity. Families are meant to be a source of emotional support and comfort, warmth and nurturing, protection and security. Family relationships provide children with a critical sense of being valued. Within every healthy family is a giving and taking of love, and empathy by every family member.

Families are places where every child and adult should feel that he or she is special and be encouraged to pursue his or her own dreams. Within the family everyone's individuality is permitted to flourish.

Families give guidance about personal values and social behavior. Families help develop positive interpersonal relationships, and provide an environment that encourages learning both in the home and at school. Families give children a sense of history and a secure base from which to grow and develop.

The Feast of the Holy Family is a feast for your family. Good, nurturing families take work and effort. Good families do not happen automatically. So, let the Holy Family of Nazareth be your inspiration and your help. With God’s grace your home will truly become a “domestic church” where your loved ones will desire to come not only at Christmastime, but at all times of the year.