

Feast of the Holy Family

Some of us, of a certain age, remember George Burns. George was a comedian and actor who was born in 1896 and lived to be one hundred years old. For many years, he worked in Las Vegas and was known for his black-rimmed glasses, his long cigars, and the beautiful showgirls that surrounded him.

Not only was George a well-known comedian, but he also was called the Las Vegas philosopher because of his witty and wise commentaries on life. As often happens to people of advancing years, George was asked the question: "To what do you attribute your long life?" He answered: "There are a few things, but one important thing is to have a large, loving, caring family...in another city."

Although this was another of George's jokes, there is a kernel of truth in it. There is a tension and discord that can spring up when we interact with our family members. It can seem that, the more we deal with our family, the more likely we are to 'step on each other's toes'.

This Sunday, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family and the words that come to mind when we read the Scripture passages are: submission and obedience. We read in the Gospel that Mary and Joseph submitted and obeyed the requirements of the Law of Moses. They presented Jesus in the temple as required and had Him circumcised according to the Law. The Gospel ends with these words: "When Mary and Joseph had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon Him."

Mary and Joseph submitted entirely to the Law and, even though Jesus was the Son of God, He submitted to His parents and lived the life of an obedient son 'growing in wisdom and strength'.

In the Collect for the Mass, the opening prayer that 'collects' our intentions, we prayed: 'Graciously grant that we may imitate the Holy Family in practising the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity.'

This is our prayer. But we can become discouraged when we try to come up to the standard set by the Holy Family. Their ideal example of family life can seem very far from the broken relationships that we face in our own families.

Let us ask God for the grace to follow the example of the Holy Family and to place our trust entirely in Him. Let us ask God to help us to reach out to others in our family to heal our wounded relationships so that, through reconciliation, we can be free to enter into the fullness of life that He wants for us.