

# Ask, Father James:

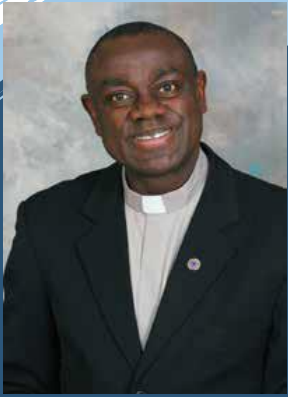
## *What our families can learn from the Holy Family of Nazareth...*

On this first Sunday after Christmas, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Mostly, our first image and ideas about the Holy Family comes from Christmas cards and works of art that depict the Holy Family in a domestic setting, at times combined with a carpenter's workshop. Pope Paul VI in the Office of Readings, Dec. 26, answers the above question by describing the "Nazareth Family" as "a model of what the family should be . . ." He calls it "the School of Nazareth." He says it offers us schooling and education in "silence," "how our families can be a community of love and sharing" and "it taught discipline."

Pope Paul VI mentions silence first, For it is in silence that we are trained in prayer. The Holy Family's life was steeped in Scripture. Mary's *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), for instance, shows a thorough knowledge of Scripture. In silence, the Holy Family was able to discern God's plan. Joseph and Mary found themselves trembling on December 24. There was no place for Jesus and his parents in the inn (Luke 2:7). Joseph and Mary are confused, baffled and needy. Joseph had no money. He had no safe place for his wife to give birth and no plausible explanation for her pregnancy. Right in the middle of these, they were able to say to God - "Come, we need you, come be born among us."

Next, the Holy Family is a community of love and sharing. Each member of the Holy Family was willing to offer himself for the sake of another. In Matthew 2:13-23, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus flee to Egypt to escape persecution. Joseph left his home and business to save the lives of his wife and Jesus. Mary too did not make a fuss or complain about the inconveniences. They all sacrificed their comfort for the child. St. Joseph, too, offered an example of total self-surrender when he humbly accepted God's will in leading his family out of danger into Egypt. They fled as refugees, in poverty, but it was what they had to do to protect the divine Child.

On the lesson of discipline, Pope Paul VI says, Mary and Joseph educated Jesus, and Joseph taught him to work as a carpenter. The Gospel according to St. Luke tells us, even Jesus "was obedient to them," and "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:51-52).



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