

Tucked right in between Christmas and New Year's is the Feast of the Holy Family. When life seems so peaceful and your pace allows for a quiet reflection and thanksgiving for so many of our blessings, the Church calls us to look upon the Holy Family. As we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, perhaps we can draw hope from the love and devotion that they showed us as they tried to serve their Father and one another. It is also an opportunity for us to examine our own family relationships as we try to more faithfully live out our own family responsibilities.

Often in our faith tradition we look on the Holy Family as *only* holy and forget that Mary and Joseph were human. They were faced with many of the same fears that parents face today. Looking back on the Holy Family, don't we all wonder more about the daily details of their life? What did they talk about and what did they disagree about? What did they fight about? A lot of times the Holy Family is depicted as so perfect or so separate from our realities that we fail to recognize them as real. We would all like to know about their struggles, conflicts and annoyances because we would all like to be able to relate to them more closely and personal and not from a distance. It would be okay to know that their lives were a little chaotic at times, just like ours. We would then be able to draw hope from among all of our challenges just as they dealt with the fear and despair of their era. Then, hopefully we could apply the same coping skills that they used in our own lives as we deal with the traumas of our day. For example, can our love for one another overcome the disagreements of yesterday that still linger in the air?

Like family, there are important things that we can rally around and they are usually those things that we hold in common, such as our faith. What we have learned from the Holy Family is that through the messiness of our ordinary lives, we are still able to connect to the riches of our faith traditions. For example, are we going to be able to let go of the hurts of our past and hold onto the love that flows from the Holy Family toward the each of us? Can we prepare for the New Year by forgiving someone, perhaps in our own families, and also asking forgiveness to those we have hurt?

This New Year let us attempt to be at the side of one another, within our own families and our personal relationships during this coming year. Even during those times of hurt, despair and death, just as Mary remained at the side of her Son during His time of pain, fear and eventually death. Let us draw strength from those brief glimpses that we are given into the rituals of the family life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. When we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family, we celebrate ourselves as God's children, for we are also a holy family.

May this new year of 2010 be filled with abounding love and overflowing joy for you and all those you love!

Blessings,

Cherie