



**Words spoken by the Holy Father, Benedict XVI,
on the Feast of the Holy Family (from Vatican City) . . .**

"During his life in Nazareth, Jesus honoured the Virgin Mary and righteous Joseph, being subject to their authority during the whole time of his infancy and adolescence (Luke 2:51-52). In this way, he made evident the primary value of the family in the education of a person. Jesus was introduced to the religious community by Mary and Joseph, frequenting the synagogue of Nazareth.

With them he learned how to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as narrated in the Gospel passage that the liturgy of the day proposes for our meditation. When he was 12 years old, he stayed behind in the temple, and his parents took three days to find him. With that gesture, he led them to understand that he had to "attend to his Father's business," that is, to the mission that God had entrusted to him (Luke 2:41-52).

This Gospel episode reveals the most authentic and profound vocation of the family: that of supporting each one of its members on the path of discovery of God and of the plan he has ordained for them. Mary and Joseph educated Jesus above all by their example: From his parents, he learned all the beauty of the faith, of the love of God and of his law, as well as the exigencies of justice, which finds its fulfilment in love (Romans 13:10).

From them he learned first of all that one must do God's will, and that the spiritual bond is worth more than that of blood. The Holy Family is truly the "prototype" of every Christian family that, united in the sacrament of marriage and nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, is called to carry out the marvellous vocation and mission of being a living cell not only of society but of the Church, sign and instrument of unity for the whole human race.

Let us now invoke together the protection of Mary Most Holy and of St. Joseph for every family, especially for those in difficulty. May they be supported so that they will be able to resist the disintegrating impulses of a certain contemporary culture that undermines the very basis of the family institution. May they help Christian families throughout the world to be the living image of the love of God.

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[Translation by ZENIT]

