



St. Anne
CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY

December 27, 2009

Solemnity of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

‘Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’—Luke 2:49

Dear Friends:

The word “Family” is a word that has a charged meaning. When one mentions the word different images come to mind depending on one’s experiences. Today there are many different expressions of family and we encounter them all in our parish family.

If one looks at history we see that the concept of family has evolved over the millennia. For most of that time the family was not conceived of as solely the nuclear family of two parents and several children. Rather, it was the extended family living together in close proximity like a tribe.

For a good part of history men could have multiple wives (and still in some places today). Women and children had few if any rights. Parents chose their children’s spouses. In ancient Rome the *pater familias* could kill or sell into slavery wife or children with impunity. Even the Old Testament permitted the stoning of recalcitrant children. Not exactly what we would hold today as being ideal.

The idea that there was ever one way of being family or an idyllic time or place of family is fantasy or propaganda. There are many who today are battling over how to define the family. Family is important for us all, however, we must be careful to have a flexible concept of family especially if we look to Jesus and his family.

Today’s Gospel story we see that Jesus comes to redefine things, “Did you not know that I had to abide in my Father’s house?” (Lk 2:49) We know that Jesus comes to change relationships. “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it.” (Lk 8:21)

Jesus will offend those who seek to exclusively define relationships. He welcomes those into his family that the self-proclaimed cognoscenti (those who think that only they can define) have rejected. Jesus will claim all the unwanted as his family and as God’s beloved children.

What makes the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph holy is that they all seek to do the will of God. And the will of God (as the second reading from the First Letter of John tells us today) is to love one another. It is not what our blood relations are, nor the shape of our family, nor do its experiences that make us resemble the family of Jesus, but our obedience to love one another.

We are already God’s beloved children. This is not a privilege that we have earned but God’s gift. We already have a place at God’s family table and are invited to remain there in the embrace of God.

Joy and Peace,

Fr. Ron