

First Sunday after Epiphany

The Ideal Family Life

"He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (Luke, 2:51)

The family is the most important form of human society, for the family is destined by the Creator to provide for the propagation of the human race and to guard and direct the young until they are able to make their own way in the world. The larger unit of human society, the State, depends in great measure for its success on the way in which family life is conducted throughout the nation. Because of this vital importance of family life the Catholic Church every year sets aside the first Sunday after Epiphany as the Feast of the Holy Family, and on this day the Gospel describes the family life of the ideal family which dwelt in Nazareth almost two thousand years ago.

The incident related in the Gospel is one that is not very thrilling or dramatic, and happens frequently in human life. A child is lost, his parents seek him, he is found again. But the circumstances that surround this particular incident have a special significance because the child was the true Son of God. He had a great mission to accomplish on earth, and made what may be called the first manifestation of His teaching authority in the company of the learned doctors of the law in the temple. Yet, when His mother and foster father sought Him, He returned obediently to Nazareth and was subject to them for many years.

Strictly speaking, He was not obliged to obey Mary and Joseph, because He was God; yet, to teach young people the duty of obedience to their parents, He made Himself subject to His creatures. This is a lesson that is sorely needed today, especially by the boys and girls of our land.

The virtue exemplified by Mary and Joseph was love for each other and for the child whom God had given to their custody. Together they visited Jerusalem, though the law required only the attendance of men and boys above the age of twelve. When they returned to Nazareth, it is evident that their attention and solicitude were centred about the Divine Child, for "His mother kept all these things carefully in her heart" (*Luke, 2:51*).

This lesson of love and fidelity on the part of married couples toward each other and of self sacrificing care for their offspring is also needed by married people of our day, when there are so many examples of unhappy homes because of the selfishness of husband and wife and of their neglect of their obligations toward their children.

Practical Application

Try to practice in your own home the virtues exemplified by the Divine Child and by Mary and Joseph toward each other and toward Jesus. Thus you will make your family a truly happy and holy family.