

Feast of the Holy Family (December 28, 2025)

As we celebrate this weekend, the Feast of the Holy Family, it's easy to imagine what we experience here at the manger and in the days and years that follow – an ideal that doesn't exist—a perfect family, a perfect home, a perfect story.

But the Church does not present Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to us as a *perfect* family – but rather a *holy* one. And there IS a difference.

When I entered the seminary, I was told—quite honestly—that had I applied years earlier, I would not have been accepted.

- My parents were divorced.
- My father was baptized but not practicing his faith.
- My mother was not Catholic.
- There were addictions on both sides of my family.

Those realities were once seen by bishops and seminary formators as disqualifiers – I can't imagine what happened to men who were discouraged in their vocations by that.

Today, we understand something far more important: no family is perfect—and God works in the messiness and difficulties of our lives if we give ourselves to Him. The Church as God's instrument here on earth still pays attention to a person's family background— not to judge or exclude—but to understand. Because our families shape us and help us to become the people God wants us to be – not just in the good things and our strengths, but through our wounds, weaknesses and failings and the struggles too.

Many people carry a quiet sense of shame because their family doesn't match some idealized image of what a "good" family is supposed to look like. That shame can weigh heavily on our hearts – and we need to ask God to take that away. It can affect how we relate to others, how we trust, how we commit, and even how we imagine God sees us.

I thank God every day for my imperfect, sometimes broken, sometimes complicated family. But I didn't always.

That gratitude came through time, prayer, and grace—through learning to see God's presence not despite our struggles, but *within* them. And that's why today's feast matters so much. Because when we look honestly at the Holy Family, we don't see an easy or ideal life. Joseph wrestled with fear and

uncertainty. Mary carried in her heart the knowledge that her Son would suffer terribly – not knowing how or when. They lived under threat, fled as refugees, and faced poverty and danger. Family life for them was not perfect, but it was a faith-filled life they lived.

At Christmas, we gathered around the manger and were reminded that God chose to be born not into comfort or security, but into an ordinary, fragile family. In Jesus, God took on our humanity—*all of it*—including weakness, vulnerability, and struggle. That choice teaches us something essential: **holiness is not found in perfection, but in faith, trust, and love.**

Many of us wish our families were different—more peaceful, more united, less complicated. But holiness doesn't begin by wishing for another family. It begins by learning to love the one God has given us.

The Second Vatican Council called the family the “domestic Church”—the first place where faith is lived, tested, and passed on. Not because families get it right all the time, but because God is present there, if we allow Him to be.

So, what does this mean for us?

- It means choosing gratitude over comparison with other families – where we are likely wrong
- It means choosing patience over criticism of our own family.
- It means forgiveness—again and again and again.
- It means constantly bringing prayer in our homes.
- It means staying connected, even when it's hard.

Perfection is not what God expects of us – but faithfulness is. If we are faithful, we aim ourselves towards perfection, towards Heaven.

As we honour Jesus, Mary, and Joseph today, may we be grateful for our own families—not because they are flawless, but because they are the place where God is at work. The story of the Holy Family continues in our homes—every time we love, forgive, and place God at the centre of our lives.