

# A Reflection from Fr. Canisius for the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Dear Parishioners,

Today is the Feast of the Holy Family. It is always celebrated on the first Sunday after Christmas, appropriately linking the Incarnation of Jesus to the human family who loved, protected, and taught him.

Sometimes, when we think of the Holy Family, we imagine them as different from ourselves: holier and more spiritual. Well, that is certainly true. They were perfect in obedience and virtue, and they fulfilled the biblical prescriptions for properly caring for and loving one another in the sight of God, as explicated throughout the Scriptures.

So yes, the reality is that they were holy, but they were also fully human, which means that what they attained is possible for each one of us. Often, we try to make them more like *us* so we can “relate” to them, when really, we are called to imitate *them* in their holiness. We are here, in Church, as a Church family, precisely because they were *not* ordinary! Rather than make Jesus, Mary, and Joseph more like us, we are given the command, opportunity, and grace to be more like them.

They were committed to God and to one another despite terrible hardships and circumstances. In an address a few years ago on this feast day, Pope Francis said: *Every nativity scene shows us Jesus together with Our Lady and St. Joseph in the grotto of Bethlehem. God wanted to be born into a human family, he wanted to have a mother and father like us. Like us, today, Mary and Joseph felt sorrow, grief, fear, uncertainty, and unease. He continued, Jesus wanted to belong to a family that experienced these hardships, so that no one would ever feel excluded from the loving closeness of God (Angelus address, Dec. 29, 2013).*

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph can help us, guide us, give us strength, and remind us that God has a plan for our lives. He asks us to conform our hearts and minds to him and what he wills for us. When we do, the road may still be filled with difficulties, but we are able to meet them with trust and confidence that God is an integral part of our family, helping us face whatever comes our way — that we, too, may become *strong, filled with wisdom*, and have the favor of God upon us.

As we begin a new year 2024, “*The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!*” The Lord takes great delight in looking at us! Each day, God gazes upon us with love. His face is shining down upon us, just as the sun shines upon the earth.

Happy New Year 2024!

**Fr. Canisius**