



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

February 2015

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IMITATING THE HOLY FAMILY FOUR TRAITS THAT MAKE IT POSSIBLE

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Like many parents, every day my wife and I face real and challenging issues in our family. We have two teenage sons and three younger children. Like many families, our children fight and bicker.

Sometimes they are loving and kind, but at other times they are disrespectful. Sometimes they resist doing chores and homework.

In addition to these very common problems with our children, my wife and I have to balance work and family life, make educational decisions for our kids, track our finances, and work through marital disagreements. This is our life! While we would never trade any of our kids (at least not most days!), each day presents its own set of dilemmas along with plenty of tension.

This reality stands in stark contrast to the perception of the Holy Family that I cherished as a child. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph seemed to have such a peaceful existence. After all, Mary and Jesus never sinned, and Joseph behaved like a saint! This makes it easy to dismiss the "Holy Family" as passé or irrelevant in today's world.

That's why it's so vital not to settle for a shallow understanding of the Holy Family! Even though they lived in a different age and culture, the family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph can bring us hope by showing us how we too can live as a "holy family."

Beset with Trials. Joseph and Mary faced real problems, even serious crises that families typically don't confront. Imagine how you would feel if armed soldiers were searching house to house for your son or daughter, intent on murdering your child! Fear, rage, and bitterness might grip you, not just for days but for years. This is just one of the trials that Mary and Joseph endured. Afraid for their son's life, they fled their home and the only country they had ever known. Later they had to forgive those who had threatened them lest they be bound by bitterness.

Even before Jesus' birth, Mary had already endured trial. Many in her town may well have known of her pregnancy outside of marriage. Rumors in a small town can be vicious, and Mary was likely the butt of various jokes and gossip from those with whom she had grown up. All of this before facing the normal struggles of raising a son!

Jesus' parents also faced financial pressures. Because Jesus had been born into relative poverty, there was barely enough money to pay for even the least expensive Jewish circumcision. Living modestly was the rule by which they lived. They had to be frugal and still tithe. Then, as their son turned twelve, they faced perhaps their greatest scare: a runaway child!

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OVERVIEW FOR THE MONTH

www.catholicculture.org

The month of February is traditionally dedicated to the Holy Family. Between the events which marked Christmas and the beginning of Christ's public life the Church has seen fit to recall the example of the Holy Family for the emulation of the Christian family.

Though the shortest month of the year, February is rich in Liturgical activity, for it typically begins in one Liturgical Season (Ordinary Time), ends in another (Lent), and contains a feast (Presentation of our Lord) that bridges two other seasons (Christmas and Easter)! In addition, the faithful may receive in February three of the four major public sacramentals that the Church confers during the liturgical year: blessed candles, the blessing of throats and blessed ashes.

Ideally, the members of the domestic church should try to have the candles for their home altar blessed on Candlemas Day (February 2); and the next morning, on the Feast of St. Blaise, all might receive the blessing of the throats. Always a solicitous Mother, the Church offers this sacramental during the wintry month of February, and also sets aside the World Day of Prayer for the Sick on February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. □

FEASTS FOR FEBRUARY

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of February are:

- 1 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 2 Presentation of the Lord, Feast
- 3 Blaise; Ansgar, Opt. Mem.
- 5 Agatha, Memorial
- 6 Paul Miki and Companions, Memorial
- 8 Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 10 Scholastica, Memorial
- 11 Our Lady of Lourdes, Opt. Mem.
- 14 Cyril and Methodius, Memorial
- 15 Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sunday
- 17 Fat Tuesday, Opt. Mem.

- 21 Peter Damian, Opt. Mem.
- 22 First Sunday of Lent, Sunday
- 23 Polycarp of Smyrna, Memorial

The feasts of St. Jerome Emiliani and St. Josephine Bakhita (February 8) and the Chair of St. Peter (February 22) will not be celebrated this year because they are superseded by the Sunday liturgy. □

OUR CENACLE CORNER

*Seeking a deeper relationship with God
through meditation of passages from Holy Scriptures*

Discipleship and Evangelization Begin with Prayer

Luke 11:1-4

Matthew 6:8

Matthew 7:7

Psalm 145:18

Psalm 91:15

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH

THE SEASON'S FINALE

Dr. Pius Parsch

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THE MEANING OF CANDLEMAS

Candlemas is the closing feast of the Christmas cycle, forming a beautiful transition to Easter. In this feast we see Christ still as a little Child in the arms of His mother, but we also see Mary already bringing her son to the temple to offer Him as a sacrifice to God. It is primarily a feast of our Lord and in the second place a feast of Mary.

THE MEETING OF MANKIND WITH GOD

In order to understand fully the liturgy of this feast, we must see it in relation to the other great celebrations of the Christmas cycle; Christmas, Epiphany and Candlemas are the high-points of the winter cycle. In these feasts we can see a beautiful progression in mankind's reception of God's revelation and in mankind's union with God. At Christmas the "light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it." Only a few receive the light: the mother, the shepherds who stand beside the crib. At Epiphany the light shines forth over Jerusalem, the Church: "Arise, be enlightened O Jerusalem, for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," and the pagan world flows out of the darkness to enter Jerusalem the city of light. On Candlemas day the light is in our hands, we bear it both in the procession which is a special part of today's celebration, and in the Mass. The Church as a bride goes forth to meet the Lord her bridegroom, and full of longing she receives into her arms the Divine Mercy become man.

It is this very climax that makes the feast so beautiful. On Christmas the Church is completely in the background, the newborn divine King rules the liturgy. On Epiphany the Church appears "as a bride adorned with the garment of salvation, bedecked with her jewels" and the liturgy celebrates a wedding feast. Now we take still another step forward: the bride adorns her bridal chamber and goes forth to meet the bridegroom. Therefore we sing the wedding song: "O Daughter of Sion, adorn thy bridal chamber and welcome Christ the King; embrace Mary, for she who is the very gate of heaven, bringeth to thee the glorious King of the new light. Remaining ever Virgin, in her arms she bears her Son begotten before the day-star, whom Simeon receiving into his arms, declares unto all peoples to be the Lord of life and of death and the Saviour of the world."

It is precisely in the meeting of mankind with God that the main point of this feast lies. Indeed the Greeks call it Hypapante, the Meeting. Mankind officially meets the Lord in His temple, the Church. The invitatory of Matins, as a rule expresses the thought of a feast in the briefest form; on Candlemas we sing this invitatory: "Behold the Lord, the ruler, cometh in to His holy temple. Rejoice and be

glad O Sion. Go forth to meet thy God." In the Mass we stand with outstretched hands to meet the bridegroom. we pray Psalm forty-seven: "We have received Thy mercy, O Lord, in the midst of Thy temple." So the thought of the meeting, the sacred union of humanity with her bridegroom Christ, rules the feast; the mediator of this meeting is the venerable figure of Simeon upon whom the liturgy dwells with loving attention.

A FEAST OF LIGHT: CANDLEMAS

A second important motif of the feast is the light, that great symbol of Christ and the divine life of Christ in us. The Church takes the words of the old man Simeon, "A light to enlighten the Gentiles," as an occasion to celebrate a true feast of light. She blesses candles to be used in her liturgy, and in the homes of the faithful. We should take these candles home to be burned during family prayer, during storms in times of trial, and especially when the sick receive Communion or the last sacraments are administered.

On this feast, the Church also reminds us of the baptismal candle which is a sign of every child of God and a symbol of the apostolic task of the laity. Every year on Candlemas we receive anew, as it were, a baptismal candle with which we can go forth with burning lamps to meet the Bridegroom when He comes to the wedding feast.

How beautiful is the symbolism of light! We each receive a blessed candle from the hand of the Church. Once again, as she has done over and over again with unstinted liberality through the course of the year, the Church gives us Christ and the Christ life. After we have each received our candle, we go in procession bearing the burning light which signifies Christian life and our task as Christ bearers.

The Palm Sunday procession is a counterpart of this Candlemas procession. On Candlemas we are light bearers, on Palm Sunday we are "martyrs," witnesses. The procession ends by leading us back into the Church, into the house of God which is the image of heaven; so shall we follow Christ through this life into heaven.

It is an especially beautiful and meaningful custom that at the Eucharistic Sacrifice on Candlemas the faithful hold their burning candles during the singing of the Gospel and during the canon, from the Sanctus until the Communion.

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KNOWING OUR SAINTS

SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS

FEAST DAY – FEBRUARY 14

www.catholic.org

Cyril and Methodius must have often wondered, as we do today, how God could bring spiritual meaning out of worldly concerns. Every mission they went on, every struggle they fought was a result of political battles, not spiritual, and yet the political battles are forgotten and their work lives on in the Slavic peoples and their literature.

Tradition tells us that the brothers Methodius and Constantine (he did not take the name Cyril until just before his death) grew up in Thessalonica as sons of a prominent Christian family. Because many Slavic people settled in Thessalonica, it is assumed Constantine and Methodius were familiar with the Slavic language. Methodius, the older of the two brothers, became an important civil official who would have needed to know Slavonic. He grew tired of worldly affairs and retired to a monastery. Constantine became a scholar and a professor known as "the Philosopher" in Constantinople. In 860 Constantine and Methodius went as missionaries to what is today the Ukraine.

When the Byzantine emperor decided to honor a request for missionaries by the Moravian prince Rastislav, Methodius and Constantine were the natural choices; they knew the language, they were able administrators, and had already proven themselves successful missionaries.

But there was far more behind this request and the response than a desire for Christianity. Rastislav, like the rest of the Slav princes, was struggling for independence from German influence and invasion. Christian missionaries from the East, to replace missionaries from Germany, would help Rastislav consolidate power in his own country, especially if they spoke the Slavonic language.

Constantine and Methodius were dedicated to the ideal of expression in a people's native language. Throughout

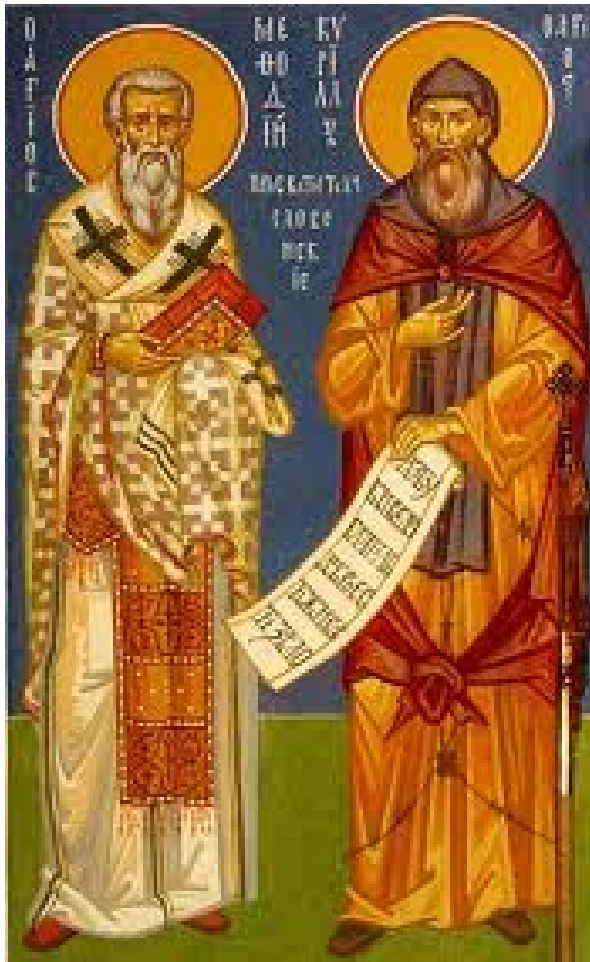
their lives they would battle against those who saw value only in Greek or Latin. Before they even left on their mission, tradition says, Constantine constructed a script for Slavonic -- a script that is known today as Glagolitic. Glagolitic is considered by some as the precursor of Cyrillic which was named after him.

Arriving in 863 in Moravia, Constantine began translating the liturgy into Slavonic. In the East, it was a normal procedure to translate liturgy into the vernacular. As we know, in the West the custom was to use Greek and later Latin, until Vatican II. The German hierarchy, which had power over Moravia, used this difference to combat the brothers' influence. The German priests didn't like losing their control and knew that language has a great deal to do with independence.

So when Constantine and Methodius went to Rome to have the Slav priesthood candidates ordained (neither was a bishop at the time), they had to face the criticism the Germans had leveled against them. But if the Germans had motives that differed from spiritual concerns, so did the pope. He was concerned about the Eastern church gaining too much influence in the Slavic provinces. Helping Constantine and Methodius would give the Roman Catholic church more power in the area. So after speaking to the brothers, the pope approved the use of Slavonic in services and ordained their pupils.

Constantine never returned to Moravia. He died in Rome after

assuming the monastic robes and the name Cyril on February 14, 869. Legend tells us that his older brother was so grief-stricken, and perhaps upset by the political turmoil, that he intended to withdraw to a monastery in Constantinople. Cyril's dying wish, however, was that Methodius return to the missionary work they had begun.



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GOD TOUCHED ME

MAY MY SON BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS AND NOT FEAR OR BE IN DREAD,
FOR IT IS YOU, LORD, OUR GOD, WHO GOES WITH HIM.
YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE HIM OR FORSAKE HIM.

Deuteronomy 31:6

A Pilgrim's Testimony
11th Century Sanctuary of Our Lady of Monserrat | Barcelona, Spain
The Spiritual Army of God the Father's Pilgrimage
to Lisbon, Fatima, Spain, Lourdes & Paris | December 4-21, 2014

My dear new friends in Christ and our Blessed Mother:

I am not a public person and what I will state here today is truly out of my character.

This is not about me. This is about my son Carlo Angelo who we call Bonggo. He is my third son and just about the most intelligent.

In kindergarten, he was always sent to sit in the corner, in the backend of the classroom, because he was telling his classmates, at their desks about the fairy and children's stories his teacher was going to read in class.

He excelled academically in elementary and high school. He got 99% in the SAT test back in the Philippines. He attended the University of the Philippines, Diliman campus for his first and a half years in college prior to his migration to the United States.

He applied at UC Berkeley and got a scholarship after he challenged to get tested on the courses he took at Diliman, because he did not believe he should take them again at Berkeley. Bonggo graduated Cum Laude at Berkeley with a Bachelor of Science degree, major in Philosophy.

My niece, Felicia, described UC Berkeley as a university that has organizations of everything that students can protest against. I believe his non-belief in God took root over at UC Berkeley. Let me tell you that I have nothing against UC Berkeley as an institution of learning.

After graduation at UC Berkeley, he went to Cornell University, Ithaca, New York to pursue Master's Degree in Philosophy.

While in New York, things were pretty normal. At one time he had friends come visit him at his apartment, where they saw my picture, at the bottom of which was written, "Queen of Angels" and my office phone number. He told me that his friends said, they did not know that he not only honored me but also venerated me. He said that he did not tell them that "Queen of Angels" was the hospital where I worked. So he left it at that – I became the pseudo-Queen of Angels to his friends.

I last heard from Bonggo on Mother's Day of 1996. He sent me a card:

"Dear Mom,

I am not able to send you flowers, just know that I love you very much.

Love,

Bonggo"

From 1996 to date, I have not heard from Bonggo nor has he contacted any member of my family. There was a time when I thought that he perished in New York during the 911 terrorist attack. He did not. Through technology and detective work, I found out where he is. I have not reached out to him. I don't want him to know, that I know his whereabouts. He has settled where he is, and I don't want him to run away again. I want him to contact me on his own.

Why do I think he is now a non-believer? Because in the past, when anyone mentioned or praised the wonders and blessings God has bestowed, he would quietly say that God has nothing to do with the good and the wonderful.

I am not praying for Bonggo to contact me or get in touch with family – if that happens God has made it happen.

What I pray for and what I would beg you to do is to pray with me that my son, Bonggo return to God and practise his Catholic faith.

Deep in my heart, God will make it happen, in God's own time, not mine.

I have always had Bonggo in my heart, but I pray for his heart to embrace God.

Thank you so much. ☐

Editor's Note: All mothers who are willing to get on their knees and cry out for the hearts of their sons, James 5:16b says: *"The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with"*.

***If you have any personal articles
on God's miracle in your life
you want to share with the devotees,
we may be reached at
the following e-mail addresses
and phone numbers:
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alice.a@spiritualarmyofgod.org
(702) 274-4315 and/or (213) 385-7798.***

SPIRITUAL ARMY NEWS DISPATCH

INFANT JESUS CELEBRATION ALA STO. NIÑO

The feast day of our Baby God culminated on January 24 at the Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master. After a nine-day novena which started on the



15th, all devotees, garbed in red, converged at the convent with one purpose alone: to give glory to the infancy of God the Father's only begotten Son!

The Spiritual Army of God the Father planned a simple celebration amongst the Los Angeles devotees. But Baby God had His plans in festivity of food and dances. This year our Baby Jesus wanted a petition dance which rhythms with a simple song petition entitled Sto. Niño. The usual Sinulog music was relegated to be a secondary song of Jesus' favorite. The song, Sto. Niño aptly describes the compassion and the giving mood of our

dear Infant Jesus if we ask Him with pure and sincere heart!

The food did not even come close to simplicity but

was grandiose! Everyone was so enthused with the song that it was played every minute, whenever the devotees want to hit the road with their petition and glorification dance.

The celebration would not have been complete without the Liturgical mass officiated by Fr. Vincent Hughes and the special blessing for children and the Sto. Niño images and 40th wedding anniversary blessing for Rudy and Josie Paquillo!

At the end of the day one can only wonder and ask *When and where the next Infant Jesus celebration will be?* Wait and watch -- the Ministry will have that answer soon! VIVA STO. NIÑO!!!! ☐



WE PILGRIMS TO LOURDES AND OTHER SACRED SITES

A group of devotees and friends of The Spiritual Army of God the Father, around 35 people, went on a pilgrimage on December 4, thru 21, 2014. This pilgrimage itinerary is not found in any of the pilgrimage booklets of pre-planned trips because this has been planned according to Divine Providence through Mother Mary. These pilgrims, many of them who have never been to Portugal, Spain and France,



embarked on this 18-day journey in the hope of deepening their faith and their love of Jesus Christ the Blessed Mother and the saints.

Each day, the pilgrims learned something more about the people and the holy sites, and the devotions they

inspired – all with the aim of experiencing a conversion of heart, a turning back to God and entering into a deeper relationship with Him.

The shrines, basilicas and cathedrals on the itinerary are renowned for their beauty and historical significance in the growth and development of the Church. The different holy sites of the Blessed Mother

include: Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Garabandal, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Montserrat, Our Lady of LaSalette, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal and Notre Dame Cathedral.

Some saints the pilgrims have encountered along the way include: St. Teresa of Avila, St. Bernadette, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. John Vianney, St. Catherine Laboure, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, and St. Louise de Marillac.

The pilgrims were transported from one site to another via a tourist bus from Lisbon, Portugal ending in Paris, France.

During the journey, the pilgrims either prayed, sang, napped or watched a movie regarding the next holy site they would be visiting. Prayer intentions were offered at each site visited.

Everything in our pilgrimage itinerary went as planned, except in Lourdes. The pilgrims' faith was tested and also rewarded in this great shrine of our Blessed Mother. The mass on our first day there was at the grotto – the best place to have a celebration of the mass where the actual apparition of our Blessed Mother occurred. Since it was winter time and the shrine was partially opened, there was no candlelight procession. Yet the pilgrims, armed with their great faith, held their own private candlelight procession. The baths in the grotto waters - which are believed to have healing powers - have been closed until the bath halls can be cleaned of mud and their water pumps repaired due to the flooding that occurred in 2012 and 2013. Still fired with their great faith, the pilgrims bought containers and filled them with water to drink and bathe in the privacy of their hotel rooms. The pilgrims' faith can best be explained by this opening line in the movie, "Song of Bernadette" which runs as follows: "For those who have faith, no explanation is necessary. For those without faith, no explanation is sufficient."

None of the above could have unfolded in the way it did, if it were not for the coordinators. They have expressed care for each soul in the group by their sincere desire to help each one experience the holy sites in the best way suited to the pilgrims' spiritual needs of the moment. Messages revealed by our God and Mother Mary, have been shared. Formation of prayer buddies enhanced everyone's prayer lives. And most of all, everyone thanks the coordinators for their generosity in providing each one a personal journal, prayer and meditation booklet which have greatly aided all in their spiritual quest. □

THE ARMY'S PROJECTS - 2015

THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER MINISTRY WILL EXTEND ITS 2014 UNDERTAKINGS TO 2015 FOCUSING MORE ON DISCIPLESHIP AND EVANGELIZATION THROUGH FAITH, PRAYERS AND DEEDS.

1. THE LAUNCHING OF THE 800 OUR FATHER DEVOTION TO ETERNAL FATHER ON JULY 18, A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE FEAST OF OUR ETERNAL FATHER.
THIS DEVOTIONAL PRAYER HAS BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER AND IS ROOTED INTO ITS MINISTRY. THIS WILL BE INTRODUCED FOR THE FIRST TIME TO ALL THE FAITHFUL AND DEVOTEES.
2. CONTINUING EFFORTS FOR OUR TOY DRIVE, RECIPIENT OF WHICH REMAINS TO BE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF LOS ANGELES.
3. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL DESIRING TO ENTER THE RELIGIOUS LIFE/PRIESTHOOD.
4. REVIVAL OF THE "KITCHEN OF MARY" FEEDING PROGRAM BY PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SERVICE HOURS TO SOUP KITCHEN ENTITIES IN THE LOS ANGELES AND LAS VEGAS AREAS.
5. ONGOING DISTRIBUTION OF OUR INSTANT CARE PACK TO PANHANDLERS/HUNGRY AND HOMELESS. IN THE CARE PACK ARE A BLANKET, A PAIR OF SOCKS, TOOTHBRUSH, TOOTHPASTE, A \$5 BILL AND A CONSECRATION CARD TO GOD THE FATHER.
6. GRANTING SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDENTS OF INDIGENT OR POOR FAMILIES WITH GOOD SCHOLASTIC STANDING IN THE PHILIPPINES.
7. SEEKING GOD THROUGH HOLY PLACES TO BE VISITED, SUCH AS THE LORETO CHAPEL'S MIRACULOUS STAIRCASE AND THE HEALING SAND OF EL SANTUARIO DE CHIMAYO IN NEW MEXICO. THE MINISTRY WILL SCOUR ALL POSSIBLE MEANS TO MAKE THIS TRIP AND FUTURE PILGRIMAGES AFFORDABLE TO ALL.

IMITATING THE HOLY FAMILY

If one of your children were missing for several days, wouldn't fear and guilt consume you? For days, Mary and Joseph must have battled the condemning thoughts that any parents would face in a similar situation: Will we ever find our son again? Is he hurt? Why didn't I keep him with me? Did he run off intentionally?

Can We Become a Holy Family? So, if Mary and Joseph faced trials just like ours, then what exactly is a "holy family"? And how are we supposed to live like them? First of all, even though much of their lives involved mundane routine, Joseph and Mary had a sense of God's call and plan for their lives. They knew that in raising Jesus, they played a unique role in God's plan. Even during the worst times, they couldn't escape the fact that God's hand was on their lives in a special way.

Of course, while no mother or father will ever again raise the incarnate Son of God as their own child, every husband and wife should have a similar sense of God's plan for their family. God has called each family together uniquely; no one else has been given the opportunity to love and raise your children. We must find that sense of awe even during the "dog days" of sibling rivalry and financial stress. God has called you personally!

Mary and Joseph's relationship wasn't based on common interests or similar personalities. While they may have been very compatible, this wasn't the basis of their unity. Their relationship with God was the foundation of their marriage, and it was this strength that held them together during trials. Similarly, it is vital that in our homes, at least one parent -- if not both -- find their strength through a relationship with God.

Husbands and wives don't always approach their faith in the same way. Often (but not always!), wives have a deeper sense of the need for God's presence in the family. In these situations, perhaps only the wife will find her strength through prayer. Single parents especially need to turn to the Lord for the energy and wisdom to raise their children.

Whatever the circumstances, it is a blessing when one parent deepens in his or her faith walk with God. During trials, the faith of one parent will produce strength and peace for the whole family. Of course, it's best when both parents are seeking to wholeheartedly follow the Lord.

Set Apart for God. Another aspect of being a "holy family" is that we have an awareness that we have been set apart for God to live out his call and build his kingdom. When we possess such an awareness, our lives will naturally reflect a different set of priorities than those held by most other people in the world. We don't need to own the most possessions. We don't need our children to win every game or academic award. We

won't find our security in the pursuits that many others desire.

Instead, being a holy family means that we try to obey God in all of our decisions. God is not simply our co-pilot, helping us out during those few times when we call upon him. Instead, we want each decision that we make -- whether it involves parental discipline or family dinners -- to be pleasing to him. We want to listen to God and live in the way that he wants us to live. This is what it means to be "set apart for God."

We want to trust God, especially in the midst of the most difficult situations. When our kids are behaving badly and we don't know how to respond, when the funds in our checkbooks are low and the fuses are short in our marriage, we want to find a way to obey God's will in our relationships. This is what it means to be a holy family.

Another important aspect of living as a holy family involves repentance and prayer. Many of us recall the movie that defined today's definition of repentance: "Love means never having to say you're sorry." Oh, if this were only the case! If you and I are to have a holy and loving family, then the exact opposite is true.

Love means seeking and offering forgiveness on a regular basis. Love means not holding grudges and angers. Love means recognizing when I have wronged my spouse and making sure that our relationship hasn't been damaged. Repentance in a marriage is one of the most beautiful gifts from heaven. It softens the heart of the offended, and it heals the hurt in a relationship. We would all do well to practice repentance and forgiveness and to teach our children to do the same.

Being a holy family also means that we will find ways to pray together as a family. We find this difficult with our kids, especially our teenagers. But in the long run, short times of family prayer combined with family attendance and participation at Mass will have a positive impact on our children. As Mother Teresa used to say, "The family that prays together stays together."

Each Family Is Unique. I know some families who really are holy. One couple has raised six children, one of whom is disabled. During these last twenty-five years, they have encouraged each of their children, including their disabled daughter, to follow the Lord and to develop their unique gifts. Most importantly, their life and love witness to a vibrant faith.

I am a close friend of another couple who don't see eye to eye on a host of issues, but they too are holy. Both had been widowed, and combining two separate families into one was a real trial for them. They brought together different parenting philosophies and strategies for discipline, and sometimes their views conflicted severely. But because of their willingness to repent and forgive each other and because they sought God's way over their own, their children have experienced a beautiful home life.

A third couple is struggling with a strong-willed child. Even though they don't have any magic answers, they are trying to learn how to help their daughter. Her angry outbursts and moods can negatively affect the atmosphere of the whole family. However, this couple has told me that their daughter has taught them how much they need God as the foundation of their family. They too are a holy family.

The strengths and weaknesses of each family differ greatly. But in every case, they are holy because they are trying to put Jesus first in their lives as best they can. One or both parents are seeking God in prayer. They are trying to make love and encouragement flow in their homes more than criticism and negativity. They are doing their best to teach their children how to repent to one another. And in every case, as a family, they attend weekly Mass.

Of course there will be moments when we fall short. At those times, we may even begin to wonder whether it's worth trying to imitate the Holy Family. Remember, however, that God is pleased with our faithfulness. While we tend to focus on our failures, he sees the intentions of our heart. When things aren't going well, it's tempting to throw up our hands in despair. Instead, we can call upon God in each moment of the day, asking him to bless our efforts to be a family that witnesses to his life and love. □

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THE SEASON'S FINALE

This has a profound meaning: in the Gospel and in the canon, Christ is present among us. That is why at every solemn High Mass lights and incense are brought in at these two times. On Candlemas the Church says to us: actually in every Mass you should bear lights in your hands, but the acolytes perform this action in your place. Now you yourselves are given the privilege of performing this function of the universal priesthood. So the Mass of this feast is a true Mass of light, almost the only one of the year.

THE PRESENTATION

On this feast the prophecy is fulfilled in which Malachy proclaimed the signal honor which the temple at Jerusalem would receive: that the Redeemer of the world would one day appear within its portals and be openly revealed to the people. For the first time Jesus enters His Father's house, the temple where He was to manifest Himself so often as the Messiah and the Son of God. The Introit, Gradual and Epistle are full of this thought, and the temple in Jerusalem to which they refer is a type of the true temple, the Church.

We commemorate and relive on Candlemas day the presentation of Christ, when He was offered in the temple to God the Father. According to the law every first born male child was dedicated to God in a particular way and must be presented in the temple to be

redeemed. But for our Lord this presentation had a deeper meaning: God did not release His Son without a price; the presentation of Christ through the hand of Mary can be called the offertory of His whole life.

If we compare the redemptive life of Jesus with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the presentation in the temple corresponds to the offertory; the death on the Cross is the transubstantiation and elevation. At His presentation we can say that the divine sacrificial Lamb lays upon the paten. When the appointed time has come He will be offered to the Father; thirty-three years later upon the cross He will complete the sacrifice. Christ's presentation in the temple was indeed the offertory of the entire redemptive work, including the self-sacrifice of all the faithful.

THE PURIFICATION

Candlemas is also a feast of our Lady who brings to God the sacrifice of her purification. By ordinance of the levitical law, every mother was obliged to be purified after the child birth for the word of the psalmist holds true of every child: "In sins was I begotten and in sins did my mother conceive me."

Certainly Mary was not bound by this law for she was the all pure one and her child was the spotless Lamb of God. Still, in humility and in a spirit of complete sacrifice with ready obedience she brought the offering of the poor, a pair of turtle doves. In imitation of our Lady and in memory of her purification, we Christians have a beautiful custom. As soon as a mother is able to leave her home after the birth of her child, her first visit is to the house of God; there she gives thanks for the safe delivery and offers her beloved child to the Lord, while the priest blesses mother and child. This is the liturgical blessing of the mother after childbirth. But this ceremony does not consist in a purification of the mother as under the Old Law; for us Christians no purification is necessary after the birth of a child. However we do commemorate Mary's act of humility in our present blessing: The mother stands at the door of the Church until she is conducted to the altar by the priest.

THE CANTICLE OF SIMEON

Our hearts are touched by the venerable Simeon with his ardent longing for redemption, the beautiful figure who had waited a whole lifetime for the Redeemer. With childlike faith, he prayed to the Son of God in the little child of the poor work-man; with glowing love, his heart grew young, for he held the infant Jesus in his aged arms. Now he demanded nothing more from this earthly life; he had seen his Redeemer and full of thankfulness he sang the night prayer of his life: "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, in peace according to Thy word."

This beautiful canticle has been adopted by the Church as her night prayer and thanksgiving for the blessings and graces of salvation. We find the song of Simeon at

the end of Compline, the official night prayer of the Church. Each evening we remember Simeon, holding the child Jesus in his arms, and with thanksgiving retiring from the service of God. When we pray the canticle of Simeon we are in a similar position; we also are in the service of God; every day we too receive the Lord spiritually into our arms in faith and in grace and in the Eucharist: every evening we give thanks inwardly for all the mercies of God and we are ready whenever it is God's will to depart from this earth. "Now dismiss Thy servant, O Lord because my spiritual eyes have seen the redeemer Jesus Christ; He is my salvation; He is my light, dispelling the darkness of my mind and heart; He is my glory and my eternal reward!" May we always end the day with these thoughts, full of peace and surrender, which the Church gives us for our evening prayer.

CONCLUSION

Candlemas is the close of the Christmas cycle. On this feast the Church gives each of her children a candle as a souvenir of the gift of the whole Christmas season we have just celebrated. The candle will remind us all year that God is with us, that He is Emmanuel.

This is the day when we carry our lighted candle during the Gospel and during the canon and into our homes and everyday life. We are reminded that Christ is with us in a threefold way: in the word of God, especially in the Gospel; in the Eucharist; and throughout our lives in grace. Emmanuel, Christ with us: that is our Christmas gift for life.

Christ is with us in the word of God: Let us realize that the word of God is more than instruction, edification, consolation and warning; let us be aware that it has sacramental power. God comes with His grace in the sacraments, but also in the word of God. The word of God is a seed filled with life. Of course this seed does not bear fruit automatically, but only when the heart of man provides a receptive soil. Then the word of God indeed does bring forth Christ in us.

Christ is with us in the Eucharist: We are familiar with this great reality, that when we receive the Eucharist, we receive Christ. Perhaps we are less conscious of the reality that through receiving the Eucharist, we ourselves are gradually transformed and become more Christ like. The body of Christ is our manna through the earthly desert. It is a seed of glorification and a pledge of the resurrection.

Christ is with us through grace, especially the grace of our baptism. The candle which we receive on this feast is another baptismal candle. Since the Church supposes that we light and use up our baptismal candle during the course of the year, each year she gives us a new one. Each time she reminds us of the words of our baptism, "Receive this burning light and guard the grace of your baptism without blame, keep the commandments of God, so that when the Lord shall come to call you to the

nuptials, you may meet Him with all the saints in the heavenly courts, there to live for ever and ever." The candle we receive on this feast reminds us of baptismal grace. That grace is Christ in us, the real Emmanuel. May we bear in our hearts the burning light of baptism during the whole coming year.

Christ is with us in the Gospel, in the Eucharist, and in grace. We cannot come closer to Him while we are on earth. We must wait until we reach heaven and there we will possess Him forever in a glorified manner. □

Pius Parsch, born John Bruno Parsch (May 18, 1884 – March 11, 1954), was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. Parsch was born in Neustift near Olmutz, Moravia, in what is now the Czech Republic. He was given the name Pius when he entered the community of Canons Regular in Klosterneuburg Abbey. He was a leading figure in the Liturgical Movement, publishing the results of recent liturgical scholarship in popularly accessible books in German. Some of these were translated into English, including *The Liturgy of the Mass* (Herder, 1940), *The Breviary Explained* (id., 1952), and *The Church's Year of Grace* (Liturgical Press, 1953).

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SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS

He couldn't return to Moravia because of political problems there, but another Slavic prince, Kocel, asked for him, having admired the brothers' work in translating so much text into Slavonic. Methodius was allowed by the pope to continue saying Mass and administering baptism in the Slavonic tongue. Methodius was finally consecrated bishop, once again because of politics -- Kocel knew that having a Slavonic bishop would destroy the power of the Salzburg hierarchy over his land. Methodius became bishop of Sirmium, an ancient see near Belgrade and given power over Serbo-Croatian, Slovene, and Moravian territory.

The German bishops accused him of infringing on their power and imprisoned him in a monastery. This lasted until Germany suffered military defeats in Moravia. At that time the pope intervened and Methodius returned to his diocese in triumph at the same time the Germans were forced to recognize Moravian independence. There was a loss involved -- to appease the Germans a little, the pope told Methodius he could no longer celebrate liturgy in the vernacular.

In 879 Methodius was summoned to Rome to answer German charges he had not obeyed this restriction. This worked against the Germans because it gave Methodius a chance to explain how important it was to celebrate the liturgy in the tongue people understood. Instead of condemning him, the pope gave him permission to use Slavonic in the Mass, in Scripture reading, and in the office. He also made him head of the hierarchy in Moravia.

The criticism never went away, but it never stopped Methodius either. It is said that he translated almost all the Bible and the works of the Fathers of the Church into Slavonic before he died on April 6 in 884.

Within twenty years after his death, it would seem like all the work of Cyril and Methodius was destroyed. Magyar invasions devastated Moravia. And without the brothers to explain their position, use of the vernacular in liturgy was banned. But politics could never prevail over God's will. The disciples of Cyril and Methodius who were driven out of Moravia didn't hide in a locked room. The invasion and the ban gave them a chance to go to other Slavic countries. The brothers' work of spreading Christ's word and translating it into Slavonic continued and laid the foundation for Christianity in the region.

What began as a request guided by political concerns produced two of the greatest Christian missionaries, revered by both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, and two of the fathers of Slavonic literary culture.

IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS:

Cyril and Methodius believed in the importance of celebrating liturgy in our own language, a privilege we have only had in last twenty years. If this change took place before your time, ask older Catholics about the differences that have taken place in their worship because of this change. If you were worshipping during the change, reflect on how celebrating in the vernacular has helped your worship and your spiritual life.

VENERATION OF SS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS

St. Cyril "fell asleep in the Lord" on February 14, 869, after making his monastic vows. During his last illness he had "a heavenly vision" and began to sing: "My heart is glad and my soul rejoices, because they said to me: 'We will go up to the house of the Lord' (comp. Pss. 15:9; 121:1)." As the hour of his death drew near, lifting up his hands to the Lord and weeping, he prayed: "O Lord, my God, Who has created the Angelic Choirs and all the Heavenly Powers, Who brought all things from non-being to being, You always hear the prayers of those who do Your Holy Will and who in fear of You keep Your Commandments. Hear, therefore, O Lord, my humble prayer, preserve Your faithful flock You have entrusted to me, a humble and unworthy servant. Deliver them from the godless and heathen malice of those who blaspheme against You, destroy trilinguistic heresy, expand Your Church and keep her firmly united. Make Your chosen people unanimous in the profession of their Faith and inflame their hearts with the truth of Your Word. You bestowed on us a great favor by calling us to preach the Gospel of Your Christ and they (i.e. Methodius and his disciples) are now ready to do their good work pleasing to You. All those, whom You have placed in my care, I render up to You, since they are Yours. Guide them by Your strong right hand and protect them that all may praise and glorify Your Holy Name, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit Amen."

After having exchanged a kiss of peace with all present, St. Cyril continued: "Blessed be the Lord, Who did not leave us a prey to our enemies, but breaking their snares has set us free" (comp. Ps. 123:6-7). Saying these words, he expired.

St. Methodius intended to return his brother's remains to their native land, as they had promised their mother, but Pope Adrian II insisted that St. Cyril be buried in Rome. His relics were placed "on the right hand side of the main altar in the basilica of St. Clement and soon many miracles were reported." Grateful people "painted his image over his grave and burned candles in front of it." In this manner the veneration of St. Cyril began. (The above description of St. Cyril's death was taken from the Slavic Life of Constantine).

With similar reverence and sobriety the Slavic Life of Methodius describes the death of the older brother, who ended his earthly pilgrimage on April 6, 885 and was buried in his cathedral at Velehrad, Moravia. After having appointed one of his best disciples, the priest Gorazd, as his successor, St. Methodius became ill. Nevertheless, on Palm Sunday he went yet to church, where he bade farewell to the prince, the clergy, and the people. Three days later, uttering Christ's words: "Lord, into Your hands I commend my soul" (Lk. 23:46), he died surrounded by his clergy.

St. Methodius was buried with great solemnity in the presence of a great multitude, who accompanied his bier with the burning candles all the way to his resting place in the cathedral. Men and women, young and old, poor and rich, free and bonded, widows and orphans mourned their "Good Shepherd and Teacher" who truly had been "all things to all men, that he might save all" (comp. I Cor. 9:22).

As in Rome at the grave of St. Cyril, so also at Methodius' sepulchre in Velehrad many miracles were wrought. His resting place became the center for numerous pilgrims, who came from near and far to implore his intercession.

In a short time the veneration of the saintly Brothers became common among the Slavs. However, the Byzantine Church, which was their "Alma Mater," never inscribed their names into the diptychs of her Saints. For their fidelity to Rome, the Church of Constantinople completely ignored two of her most prominent sons.

PRAYER

Saints Cyril and Methodius, watch over all missionaries but especially those in Slavic countries. Help those that are in danger in the troubled areas. Watch over the people you dedicated your lives to. Amen. ☐



*I am your Mother Mary . . .
As you offer the prayers before me,
look at the sincerity of your hearts,
look deep my children.
Blessings and graces come
when your hearts are one with your souls
that come from God Almighty.
No pretension, pure of heart and intentions.
My intercession before my Son Jesus
is for you beloved children.*

Mary, Your Lady of Fatima
011915

*"I am your Mother Mary.
Be more prayerful, and hearts be opened to God's words.
Constant and persistent in prayers make hearts closer
and well-focused to God's mind and contemplation more intense.
Do not be disturbed by your surroundings
but rather let surroundings join
in your commune with God through prayers.
Remember, prayer is a requisite before all graces come.
Pray like a child and be ready to accept God's communication
openly with your heart and mind focused on Him.*

Thank you my children for adhering to my call."

Mary, Your Lady of Rosary
010315



SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

- You are enjoined to practice Eucharistic Adoration at least an hour a week. Let us render God adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition. Kindly check with your respective parishes for schedules. Some churches are open 24-hours for Eucharistic Adoration.
- Pray at least one rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary daily.
- Pray the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy at 3:00 PM and at 9:00 PM daily.
- Pray the Angelus at 6:00 PM daily.
- Pray the Pro-Life Scriptural Rosary [www.rosaryoftheunborn.com] to make reparation for the crime of abortion.
- Think of ways to make reparation to Mary for the sins committed against Jesus and Mary. A very good one is to join the **First Saturday devotion**; another is the **2000 Hail Mary devotion**.
- Ask your parish priest to bless the candles that you will be using on your home altar this year.
- Meditate on the constant fiat of Our Lady of Sorrows, who embraced the will of God even as Simeon predicted that a sword would pierce her heart.
- Give extra care to the sick in your community — cook dinner for a sick mother's family, bring your children to the local nursing home (the elderly love to see children), send flowers to a member of your parish community who is ill.
- Go with your family to receive ashes at Mass on February 18. Leave them on your forehead as a witness to your faith.

THANK YOU

... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!

Psalm 106:2

FOR PRAYERS HEARD AND PETITIONS GRANTED

Thank you, Eternal Father, for Your Will that transformed our sorrow into joy, our tears of anguish into tears of thanksgiving. Our physical and spiritual re-creation, through Your Healing Hands, kept us enclosed and revived in our hope for renewed lives as we look up to the heavens praising You, in Jesus' most Holy Name, through the intercession of Mary, our Blessed Mother, and of the angels and saints.

Val from Qatar shares with us the good news about her Mother, Virginia, who is now home after being in and out of the hospital for various health issues. She also shares her own good news – her surgeon was successful in taking out all her colon tumor and her post operation period will not require chemotherapy nor radiation treatment!

She thanks the Army's prayer warriors for their unceasing intercessory prayers.

Naty and family thank The Spiritual Army of God the Father for their prayers for her husband, Luis. His PET scan is negative and his treatment will proceed as originally planned. They also thank God for granting their request.

Debbie thanks the devotees of The Spiritual Army of God the Father for their prayers and encouragement during her grieving time for the demise of her mother, Rosalind Van Heel.

2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION

The Spiritual Army of God the Father acknowledges with thanks our generous February sponsors of the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion. We are grateful that we have merited their partnership and support in providing a venue of spirituality and fellowship for the devotees of our Blessed Mother. The devotion continues to be a constant success.

Las Vegas, Nevada

Dr. & Mrs. Ramon Santos
of Pittsburgh, PA

Los Angeles, California

To be announced on Saturday
February 7, 2015

DEVOTION SCHEDULE



THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER

cordially invites you to the following devotions:

IN LOS ANGELES:

1st Saturday Devotion

The Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | 501 N. Beaudry Avenue | (213) 250-7962
Holy Mass starts at 8:30 A.M. | 1st Saturday Devotional Prayers follow.

Devotion to God the Father

Every 1st Sunday of the Month | The Monastery of the Angels | 1977 Carmen Avenue on Gower | (323) 466-2186
12:30 P.M. - Rosary to the Father | 1:15 P.M. - Holy Mass
2:00 P.M. - Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

2000 Hail Mary Devotion – February 21, 2015

at the Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | starting at 8:30 a.m.
Please call Victor at (213) 385-7798 if you wish to become a Sponsor of the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion.

IN LAS VEGAS:

1st Saturday Devotion

at The Cenacle House in The Enclave | 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, | Las Vegas, NV 89117 at 1:00 PM
Cenacle will be at 10:00 AM before the devotional prayers.

Please call Evelyn at (702)274-4315 for entry to The Enclave or for more information.

Devotion to God the Father

Every 1st Sunday of the month from 2:00 to 3:30 P.M.

at The Cenacle House in The Enclave | 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, | Las Vegas, NV 89117

2000 Hail Mary Devotion – February 14, 2015

*Please call (702) 255-9616 or (702) 274-4315 for
dates and venues for the coming months or for more information or if you wish to Sponsor the Devotion.*

IN LAUGHLIN, NEVADA:

1st Saturday Devotion

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church | 3055 El Mirage Way
Holy Mass starts at 8:00 A.M. Devotional prayers follow.

IN SAN DIEGO

Rosary to the Father

Monday – Saturday after the 8:00 A.M. Mass [Look for Iris Haj]
St. Mary's Church | 1160 S. Broadway | Escondido, CA 92025

IN THE PHILIPPINES

2000 Hail Mary Devotion - Metro Manila Area

Letty Rollan has organized the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion in various areas of Metro Manila through the members of the "Mother Butler." Please call her U.S. Vonage phone (510) 779-6652, text her at Manila #916-384-9300, and/or call her Manila landline 939-4677. Mention Mila Lumba's name to be recognized.