

“He went down with them & came to Nazareth. Jesus advanced in wisdom & age....”

I will now share with you an ancient legend about the Holy Family ---Jesus, Mary, & Joseph.

Once upon a time, the Holy Family was attempting to escape into Egypt to avoid the soldiers of King Herod, who was trying to kill the infant-Jesus. Suddenly they were stopped and surrounded by a band of outlaws. One of the outlaws, whom I will call, ‘Mr. D.,’ happened to see the child in Mary’s arms. Upon closer inspection, ‘Mr. D.’ was so awe-struck by the face of Jesus, he persuaded the others to let Mary & Joseph pass unharmed. Just before the outlaws departed, ‘Mr. D’ leaned over the infant-Jesus and said, **“Remember me, and never forget this day.”** The legend goes on to say that that outlaw turned out to be St. Dismas, the Good Thief, who was crucified along side of Jesus. It was to him Our Lord said, **“This day, you will be with me in paradise.”**

As far as legends go, this is a good one. **BUT**, I doubt that it ever happened to the Holy Family. I’ve shared it with you, nonetheless, because it makes a valid point about ‘family’ & ‘family life.’ The point is is ...all families, including the Holy Family, can find themselves in crisis from time to time. Recall the time the Holy Family was in crisis, when Jesus conveniently got lost for three (3) days in the temple. When his parents finally caught up with him, worried out of their minds, the 12-year-old ‘tween-ager, Jesus, casually explained himself saying,

“Why were you looking for me? Did you not know I must be in my Father’s house?”

Which could be translated into ‘teenage-ese:’

**“Why were you searching for me? Chill-out! Don’t you know ...I have to be me?
I have to find myself. I have to do my own thing!”**

I have a few things to say about ‘family life,’ so... pay... close... attention.

Children, I say to you: If you are hiding things from or lying to your parents, e.g., who you see, where you are go, what you do, who you ‘chat’ with, what sites you visit on line, --if you are ashamed to let your parents know of such things, --then you are wrong **and** you are headed for big trouble! So-o, stop it! Wise up, while time is still on your side! It will only come back to bite you, to hurt you, and to hurt your parents & grandparents. Sooner or later, the truth always comes out. Do yourself a favor and ‘un-complicate’ your life. Besides, that’s the only way you will, really, be happy. All the ‘covering-up,’ all the lying, gets worse and worse. It is haunting & all the worrying, just isn’t worth it. Mark my words, even if they don’t know the all the latest slang or coolest music, your parents are not... as dumb as you think!

Dads, I say to you: The best thing you can do for your kids is ...love their mother. Putting a paycheck on the table or in the account is NOT enough; it is so-o NOT enough. Let your kids see and hear your love & respect for their mom. Just think. What is the best gift your dad could have given to you? It was not material things. It was the ‘time’ he had for you ...and especially the love & respect he had for your mom. If you did not receive as much of that as you would have liked, then do better for your kids. You deserved it. Your kids deserve it. Break the cycle. You’re in charge, now. So, do it for them!

Moms, I say to you: Keep up the good work! Don’t give up on any of them. Most of all, don’t give up on you. Your mom did it before you. You can ...and will do it, too. I know it’s not fair ...to always be stuck in the middle, trying to keep peace, trying to ‘**be there**’ for everyone, picking up the pieces. Of course, there are not enough hours in a day. There are times when no one in that house understands or seems to care. All I can say is **“Hang in there!”** It won’t always be like this. Just do the best you can. That’s all that can be expected. No one ever said it was going to be easy; and, if they did, they lied!

Raising a family —being a part of a family —is no easy thing. **BUT** it is the most important thing one can possibly do or be a part of. The fate of the future rests in the hands of our parents. Nothing is more important than being a good parent ...not being a good doctor or a good lawyer or a good priest or nun, deacon, or lay-minister ...not being a best friend. **No-thing** is more important to all of us, to all of society, than being good moms and dads. If we fail there, we have failed at the foundation. And we all know what will happen to a house built on sand, a faulty foundation.

Remember ...stay close to your church and receive the sacraments frequently. Good example, not hypocrisy, is a powerful tool. God's grace, His presence, gives courage. Courage means getting back in the saddle when frightened & riding to the sound of the guns, anyway!

Parents, I pray for you when I get up in the morning.

I pray for you when I celebrate Mass each day.

I pray for you when my head hits the pillow each night.

If we **all** just do the best we can, as imperfect as we are, then we all will get through this thing, this journey called, 'life,' and ...with the Grace of God, we can relax when we get to heaven.

...for, believe it or not, we too, will have had and been a part of... a '**Holy Family.**'

We are still in the Christmas Season, so I say, Merry Christmas everyone and...

May Almighty God, our dear Abba, bless each one of you...

the Father, the Infant-Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.