

# *A letter from Fr. Behrend*

In his Angelus address on Dec. 27, the feast of the Holy Family, Pope Francis urged families across the world to seek the renewal of family life. The Pope said: "It is good to reflect on the fact that the Son of God wanted to be in need of the warmth of a family, like all children. Precisely for this reason, because it is Jesus' family, the family of Nazareth is the model family, in which all families of the world can find their sure point of reference and sure inspiration."

The Pope said that Jesus' childhood "unfolded in joy" with Mary and Joseph. "In imitation of the Holy Family, we are called to rediscover the educational value of the family unit: it must be founded on the love that always regenerates relationships, opening up horizons of hope," he said.

"Within the family, one can experience sincere communion when it is a house of prayer, when the affections are serious, profound, pure, when forgiveness prevails over discord, when the daily harshness of life is softened by mutual tenderness and serene adherence to God's will." "In this way, the family opens itself to the joy that God gives to all those who know how to give joyfully."

Pope Francis said that joyful families were also dedicated to serving others and committed to building a better world. They evangelized others by "the example of life." But he acknowledged that all families had difficulties and arguments. "I would like to say something to you: if you quarrel within the family, do not end the day without making peace. 'Yes, I quarreled,' but before the end of the day, make peace. And do you know why? Because cold war, day after day, is extremely dangerous. It does not help," he said.

He urged families to use three phrases as often as possible: "Please," "Thank you," and "I am sorry." Saying "Please" enabled family members "not to be intrusive in the life of others," he said. Expressing gratitude, he added, was "the lifeblood of the noble soul," while apologizing was hard, but necessary.

The Pope then announced a special year which will begin on March 19, 2021, and end on June 26, 2022, with the celebration of the 10th World Meeting of Families in Rome. After reciting the Angelus, the Pope expressed sympathy for families who had lost loved ones as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, which has claimed more than 1,759,000 lives worldwide as of Dec. 27, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. "I think also of the doctors, nurses and all healthcare professionals whose great example on the front line in fighting the spread of the virus has had significant repercussions on family life," he said. "And today I entrust all families to the Lord, especially those most tried by life's difficulties and by the scourges of misunderstanding and division. May the Lord, born in Bethlehem, grant them all the serenity and strength to walk together in the way of goodness."

The Pope concluded: "And do not forget these three words that will help so much to achieve family unity: 'Please' -- not to be intrusive, to respect others; 'Thank you' -- to thank each other, mutually, within the wrong; and this apology -- or when we quarrel -- please say it before the end of the day: make peace before the end of the day."

Baptism of the Lord blessings and be encouraged, we are all journeying with you. I pray our Lord richly blesses you. Always remember that I love you, there is no way I will ever love you less, and I will continue to pray for you every day. ~ Fr. Behrend