

Feast of the Holy Family
December 26, 2004
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Good Morning. Today as we said, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family and it's appropriate because most of us spend time together as a family, you know. Just came from my family this morning –drove up from Pittsburgh, and of course spent time with them last night. And again, when you celebrate the feast of the Holy Family it's a goal to be striven for and something we try to live. But again, as I said in the beginning, none of us come from the most holiest of families, especially me. Ohhhhh. But no fighting went on last night and that's a good thing. And even though I got my brother a T-shirt from San Diego with Harley Davidson on it he goes, "It's only a large!" I said, "Mother told me to only get you a large." "Well, I'm an extra Large!" "Okay, sorry." So you learn to keep your mouth shut. That's very hard for me. But anyway, the reality is we are family. Now how do we get along? In the second reading it talks about family today, and again if you put your family up to next to that – here we go again it's not going to be the easiest of things. And you know again - most people, the liberal churches of course, which we are not, cut out that second part. You know, so that you don't have to deal with the wives being subordinate and all that kind of stuff because people don't like that. Of course people only come to mass to get to hear what they like to hear. Except here, because you know better. But again, this is the way Paul says families must be and we're going to deal with this for a bit. And take the word family. How do you spell family? F- A- M- I- L- Y very good, remember I told you about a song about that a while back on that, but that's a previous thing. But we take the word family and begin with the first letter - it begins with "F" and it's interesting how Paul talks about this to. "F" stands for forgiveness. Then he says here, "Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Now again in families, that's going to be the core thing we're based on, that's why it starts there. Now I told you before, anyone you ever love is going to hurt you. It's a given. Your kids are going to hurt you. Your parents are going to hurt you. Your brothers and sisters... ohhhhhh are they going to hurt you. Your friends are going to hurt you, your husbands and wives are going to hurt you. Not on purpose it's just who we are. We're human beings. Your pastors going to hurt you....uh huh, and you're going to hurt your pastor. That's life. But, we need to be people that get beyond that. And acknowledge that and then forgive each other because forgiveness is what Christianity is about and it's what we must be about. How many people get so caught up in their own self-righteousness that they're not willing to forgive? If you're not willing to forgive you might as well go into the ground now and die. Because life has no meaning. If you haven't learned to forgive those who hurt you, you're going to be resentful, miserable person the rest of your life. You've got to forgive, and you got to just let it go. Forgiveness in families is what keeps families together. We must forgive. The second thing is that "A" in the word. Now, what's an "A" got to do with family? We got to "Allow", begins with an "A". Allow people to be people. Huh? Sometimes we want everybody to be carbon copies of us. Now, that's why God didn't give me any children so there couldn't be any carbon copies of me. But sometimes what we like to do

is we want our kids to be just like us. Ha, ha, ha. Think about that for a second. Do we really want that? We got to allow our family to be individuals. We got allow them to be who they are. Again, you've seen "A River Runs Through It", huh? One of my favorite movies. It's a guy movie and again Brad Pitt is the bad kid who dies at the end. If you haven't seen it – sorry you've missed the end. But anyway, his father is a preacher. And his father is trying to get these kids to be perfect children. Well, guess what? You're never going to have it. The more kids you have the more you know they're not all going to be perfect. You're going to allow them to be who they are. You can't make them who you want them to be. You can only help them and mold them. The God of the universe who does everything in his power to save us by dying on the cross, still people reject him. With all the love he has, with all the giving, with everything he gives they look at him and say, "puh -, I don't believe in you, spit on you, get out of here, you're nuts!" And he allows them to do that. Now if the God of the universe allows us to be who we are. Even though the consequences are eternal. Then we must allow our husbands, our wives, our brothers, our sisters, our children and parents to be who they are. And again, in that movie, after the kid has died, the father is preaching one day and he says, "I've come to truly know that you do not have to completely understand to completely love. You don't have to completely understand your family to completely love your family. So you've got to allow them to be who they are. Different than you, different ideas, different interpretations. They're going to be different. They're unique. God did not give you children to have little "yous" running around. He gave you children to have little "Hims" running around. And there's many facets in the community in the face of God. And so we must let the people in our family to be who they are – unique. Okay?

Then we get to the letter, "M". And for "M" we got to make memories. You do realize that as I sit there and think about it that now especially since my dads been gone, and my grandmother has been gone a while. The only thing I have left of them is memories. And the memories are what's most important. There the things that last. So you got to be thinking about your family. What kind of memories do you have? Do you have good memories where you laugh and where you're with each other, where you spend time with each other? Do you have these memories that when one of them is gone you're going to look back and there's stuff to hold on to? There's great things to hold on to, there's memories that'll last forever because that's all you're going to have. So we got to make sure that we're making memories that are good. So we have Christmas Eve's where were not fighting ha...it's Christmas! Where we sit there telling each other we love each other patting them on the back, encouraging them. One of the memories that I have of my dad was when I was a little kid I had a bad stomach and I had to take Pepto Bismol. And who wants to take Pepto Bismol? And I'll never forget my dad putting his arm around me and says, "Larry, I love you very much, but you're going to take the Pepto Bismol." "Okay dad." So it was a good thing he loved me and made me do something I didn't want to do, but it was okay because he told me he loved me. That was a memory that I'll always have. How about you? Are there memories in your life that are good? That are up-building? What kind of memories have you created? And life isn't over, that's why you're still here. What kind of memories are you going to make sure you create? That when you're gone or they're gone you'll have stuff to hold on to, they'll have stuff to hold on to.

The next thing we got of course is “I”. And this is our identity. What is your identity as a family? What is it that you can talk about? It’s... its part of the memories but part of who we are. Part of my identity is I was growing up of course was both my parents were cops and so we did cop-y things around the house. But we did a lot of things as a family. We had police over all the time. We had a great time. When they’d come over...ohhhhhhhh they, we had an identity that’s all I can tell you. I can’t go into much more. But you have identities, what’s the identity of your family? We just started the foundation. And so we started to put a lot of time and energy into what would be the identity of the foundation. What is it people say about us as a family? What is your identity as a family? Are you giving? Are you welcoming? Could anybody come into your house at any time? Do you have to take your shoes off when you go to your house? I used to hate that when I was a kid. When you go to Joe’s house you got to take your shoes off. Uhhh... is that an untouchable type family you are? You know, don’t live here; we just kind of look see that room no one is allowed in there. Well why do you have it? It’s a nice room. Shut up! Go walk in that room! What kind of identity are you portraying out there? Are you a family; are you welcoming? Are you standoffish? Are you judging? You create an identity. Now people are saying, “I have one of those rooms father, shut up! Okay, but that’s your identity. People are going to say stuff like that about you. You can’t go to their house, take off your shoes. Okay, if that’s what you want fine, but that’s an identity you’ve created.

The next word of course is from the second reading and it becomes over all these put on, love. The main identity we got to be as a family is a family of love. That’s when you come together and you can do that huh? At your dinner table. What’s your dinner table like? Is it a time when there’s a lot of laughing? You know when I became pastor, from growing up in the different parishes I’ve been at. So often at the dinner table the pastors of other places used that time to yell at me. So guess what I stopped doing? Stopped eating dinner at every other rectory I was ever at. Because dinnertime would become the place we got to corner Larry now. Now it’s time to let him have it. And so I’ve ever told anybody whose ever been here we don’t talk about business at the dinner table. We don’t talk about what’s negative about each other. That is never appropriate at dinner. Dinner is the time where you have fun, have a drink, relax. Talk about good things we don’t talk about the negative. Huh? What’s your dinner table like? That’s creating a memory that will be with them forever. Is the dinner table a time to yell? The time to put people down; to tell them what’s not good? Or is the dinner table a place of love? Where you build each other up, where you laugh a lot. Where you become more concerned about each other. What’s your dinner table like? And if it’s not a place of love, that talks a lot about your family. It’s time to change, you’re not dead yet. When I became pastor I said, “It’ll never be this way at my house. And it’s not, ask Fr. Rich, I only pick on him every once and a while. But it’s not a negative table. It’s a table of fun, what’s your family dinner table like?

Last letter is the word or..letter “Y”. “Y” is about you. It’s all about you. When you get married, what you’re looking at when you take the vows with your spouse 'cause it doesn’t matter about me. It’s all about you. That’s what’s most important in families is that we forget about self and think about the other. So wives, you’ve got to be more concerned about your husband than you are about yourselves that’s what it means to be subordinate. Husbands, you’ve got to be more concerned about your wife. It’s about you

- them not about you - me. Forget about "you" husbands. Drop dead, that's what it's about. Be more concerned about her feelings, her wants, her desires, her needs, than you are about yourself. That's family. Parents, you have to forget about you and take care of your kids most of you do that of course. Or you wouldn't have them. You know your life is over when you have the first one. But then kids, it's all about your parents it's not about you. You got to be willing to take out the garbage, clean the dishes, help set the table. It's about YOU! Giving them being more concerned about the other than you are about yourself.

So we look at the family and we compare our self, there are goals we got to be looking for. We got a big plate full of forgiveness, we got to allow others to be who they are we got to be people that make memories. We got to have an identity of a family and think about what our identity is. We got to be people that are filled with love especially exposed at the dinner table. And we always got to be concerned about you than I am about me. If we can do that or at least if that's our goal, we will have holy families. Not perfect families. But holy families. And that's what the goals got to be. So today we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family, it's a day we celebrate our families too. You got it? You get it? Good! May you know his love today and forever. Amen.