

December 31, 2017 – Feast of the Holy Family – Cycle B  
Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning, how are you? Blessed! Merry Christmas! Cause how many days of Christmas are there? Twelve! We cannot contain it in one day, so those of you who missed mass on Christmas Day because of the snow; thank you for those who prayed for a white Christmas, you pagans, you ahhhhh. 83.3 inches since Christmas Eve, can you imagine? So you know we only had 30 people at this Mass last uh, for Christmas, it was unbelievable. So if you missed mass on Christmas Day do you have to go to Confession? No, because, of course, you couldn't make it. I could hardly make it home to Pittsburgh. Everyone says "you're not going!" Oh yes I am and I got stuck on 26<sup>th</sup> street and I go "oh maybe I'm not going." But you know as soon as I go past that and you get to Edinboro it was fine.

Anyway, today in the middle of the Christmas Octave we sit there and celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, and it's important that we do this at Christmas because the Church knows that when we spend the most time on our family, right? Now we get to reflect on family time. And as I was reflecting on the Holy Family, I thought there had to be no place on Earth from then until now where any place was more of a loving place. Right? That had to be what the Holy Family was, a place of great love. Where Joseph and Mary loved each other so intensely. They loved Jesus, Jesus loved them, who is love. It had to be the most loving place ever. And of course the Holy Family reflects The Trinity, because you know The Trinity is that place of love, Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and their love is so intense it's the Holy Spirit.

So what happens is the family, the way that families are supposed to be, are images of The Trinity. When you look at a family you should see the love of The Trinity there. Now I know when I reflect on my family, it's the most loving place on Earth right? And your families are the most loving place on Earth correct? Yes! Don't lie to a Priest in the middle of it. Now my family at Christmas, there was not much fighting, by God's grace. But one person gave another person a finger, I wasn't part of that. They didn't see it by God's grace but you know you figure... huhhh. Fr. Larry's family is really something, oh yes we are. And the reality is, that's what I'm in amidst of. Amidst of it I know what the Lord is calling me to do is to be more loving in the midst of the family.

So what I ask all of us to do is first of all of you who are fathers, and husbands that you go to St. Joseph and if you don't have a daily prayer to St. Joseph, you start a daily prayer to St. Joseph and you pray that you become a better husband and father. Now often when people sit there and call my radio show they sitting there saying "oh Father would you pray for my spouse who doesn't know Jesus or for my children." That's nice but I'm not asking you to pray for your family right now. We'll get to that in a second. I'm asking you to pray for you. Because sometimes you're the problem. I don't know about that for sure, but I'm just saying, that sometimes we are always looking at everybody else and that the family would be perfect for this person. "Ohhh they need conversion." You need conversion first. So you pray to St. Joseph, you who are fathers and spouses, and you ask St. Joseph to make you more loving in your family.

Now again that's important because sometimes we can be very nice everywhere else except in our family, correct? Again nobody here, but there are other people.

I'll never forget, I've told you this story before, but years ago I was listening to the Christian radio station and as I was listening to the Christian radio station this woman comments that she's crying as she meets her Pastor and he goes what are you crying for? She says "last night I was praying with my daughter." Well that's a good thing. "No because when I'm praying with her she says 'God bless Mommy. God bless Daddy. God bless Grandma. God bless Snoopy.'" "That's a great thing!" says the Pastor. "Nah. But she sat there and she says 'Please let Mommy be as nice at home as she is to the people at church.'" Oooooohhhh. I wonder if anybody would pray for that for us. "Please let Mum, or Dad, or my kids be as good, as nice at home as they are to the people at church." And that means a lot.

So next we gotta go to the women. Now those of you who are mothers and those of you who are spouses that you have a prayer and you go to Our Lady and you ask Our Lady to pray for you to be more loving. Because you can't change your family, can you? The answer is no, you can't change your husband, you can't change your children the only one you can change is you! So you gotta pray, and I know most of you women here are the most loving people in the world, I know that. But there might be, for one or two of you, there might be just a little bit of change that is necessary. Just a little bit, I'm not pushing much, just a little bit more loving, I don't know. But if you need that help you go to Our Mother in Heaven and you say "Mary, make me like you. You love Joseph, you love Jesus." You might say "Oh that was easy it was Jesus and Joseph, you don't live with who I live with." Ah! You ask, this is who God gave you and your family is supposed to be the image of The Trinity. So you don't ask for the conversion of your family, yet, you ask for your own conversion. That you become more loving, a better wife, and a better mother. When I say better that doesn't mean stricter, that means more loving. Okay?

Now for the rest of us, who might not be a Father, might not be a Mother, might not be a spouse, we gotta be like who? Jesus! And so you ask Jesus, again, as I was reflecting, I think the greatest virtue of Jesus who was God and Man, of course, was His humility. Here's the God the Universe cannot contain. Who humbled Himself and placed Himself under obedience to frail human beings in Joseph and Mary. Now Mary was without sin, but Joseph had sin and He became obedient to them. What humility. So the rest of us can pray for the humility in our family that we become more loving. Because what happens with all of us, well, maybe just me. But what happens is when I get irritated with my family, it's because I'm judging my family correct? I'm judging on how none of them are perfect! Oh! I'm not judging me of course I'm just judging them. So when you come and ask Jesus for the humility of our family we stop the judging of one another of our family and we start the loving of one another in our family and that happens best when I am becoming more loving.

Now that's an aside, so you go to Jesus, Mary, or Joseph and you ask them. In your family, you develop a daily prayer that you pray that you become a better person in your family. A more loving person in your family. But then the second part is, part of this we need to become

people who pray for our family on a daily level. Those of you who are fathers, again as I've talked to you before: your job before almighty God, the reason He gave you a wife and kids, is so you could get them to Heaven. You're responsible if your kids or your wife goes to Hell, it's your fault. And so what you need to do is make sure that you're praying for every member of your family by name, that's your job, fathers. That you are the spiritual protector of your family. Again, that means as I've talked about before when I'm doing a Men's Conference, your job is to look the world, the flesh, and the devil every day and say "You gotta go through me to get to my wife and kids." That's what you gotta do. As the Spiritual Father of this Parish when I do my Holy Hour every day that's what I gotta say "You gotta go through me, to get to anyone of my parishioners." That's my job, fathers that your job. So if you're not praying daily for your children and your spouse today's a good day, we begin a New Year, you make that today what you're gonna do.

Mothers the same thing, that mothers' prayers are the most powerful prayers look at our Blessed Mother. Anything that I ever wanted, I go to Our Lady and so your prayers, just like our Blessed Mother's prayers are very effective, so you gotta decide that every day you are going to pray for your husband by name. There might be days you want to kill him. Just one or two. But you say "I may want to kill him today, Lord, but bless him and make me more loving towards him." If he doesn't know Jesus, help him to know Jesus. So if your kids don't do it, remember what brought St. Augustine, one of our greatest saints, right there, over there, the last guy on our side altar over there, prayed for by his mother for over 20-30 years and her prayers made him a good saint. Your prayers for your spouse and your children can make them great saints.

And again those of you who are children, like again I have no family apart from you people, but the reality is I had to pray for my father every day for him to come to know Jesus and on his deathbed he came to know Jesus. Because our prayers for our parents can be very effective.

So, today as we focus on this Holy Family, we go to each member and ask them to help us be more loving in our family. And then we decide today for the New Year that we are going to pray every day for every member of our family that we all one day get to make it to Heaven.

You got it? Get it? Gonna do it? May each of you know His love today and forever,  
Amen.