



BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Feast of the Holy Family
December 28, 2025
Sr. Susan Quaintance

Sir 3: 2-6, 12-14
Ps 128: 1-2, 3, 4-5
Col 3: 12-21
Mt 2: 13-15, 19-23

This feast of the Holy Family was, often, a source of contention in my not-always-so-holy family. And it all revolved around that second reading from Colossians. Of course, the upset rose, not from the beautiful first two-thirds of the reading, but from the last four verses. At the words “Children, obey your parents in everything,” my father would usually poke me in the ribs, hard, even if he had to reach over two people to do it. At the verse “Fathers, do not provoke your children” (I vividly remember the 1970’s translation being “nag your children”), adolescent me would roll my eyes and give the proverbial “dirty look.” There were heated discussions in the car on the way home from church about how sexist I found “Wives, be submissive to your husbands.” I remember tears. I remember being barked at. I remember restaurant dinners that were supposed to be festive but ended up silent.

Which is pretty ironic, given that this reading – when taken in its totality – is a virtual playbook on family and community life. Paul teaches that those virtues he lists – compassion, kindness, gentleness, humility, and patience – make life together possible. He recommends some or all of them not only to the Colossians but also to the Romans, Thessalonians, Ephesians, Corinthians, and Philippians. He teaches that love, ultimately, is the fulfillment of the law. He teaches about what being thankful looks like in the everyday, making room in our lives for the Word to fully, amply dwell, teaching each other, earnestly and solicitously guiding one another, bringing our whole hearts to prayer and worship. And he teaches that we must bear with and forgive one another – which assumes, correctly, that we will do things that need forgiveness and require others to bear with, and forgive, us.

There are lots of things I would like to do over. I would tell my fifteen-year-old self to lighten up. I would urge the thirty-year-old version of me to be more patient with Dad as his mind was beginning to fail but he was too scared to admit it – at least to his family. And the list of do overs could go on and on. But that’s not how life in time works. It’s a finite number of chances we get.

I still have time to practice in this family. As I mentally sat with Dad – and all of you – and Paul’s words to the Colossians, I did a memory exercise that I would recommend when you find yourself with a little time. Pick a person to think about. When did she show you compassion? What was a kindness he bestowed on you? When did you see her humility? When did you experience his gentleness? When was she patient? What did he bear? What did she forgive? It’s humbling and edifying and a good nudge (or, perhaps, poke in the ribs) toward being thankful. Towards being eucharistic.

So, as we approach this table of thanksgiving, remembering that we are holy and beloved, let us come with all that we were, are, and will be. Let us come with all of our families. Let us come with our successes and failures. Let us come, as citizens of our world, acknowledging and repenting that the instability and oppression our neighbors face, is so reminiscent of the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. Let us come to be nourished with the One who shows us how to be Holy Family.