

In 1880, Pope Leo XIII wrote an encyclical on marriage. It would seem that in his day and age, there was an assault on the esteemed institution of marriage. In the first place, civil courts were deciding the validity of marriages. Not only that, but there were communes and utopian communities, that sought to live without marriage. And finally, there were new religions springing up and at the time were entering into polygamous marriages - one man with many wives.

132 years ago, Pope Leo XIII sought to strengthen the definition of marriage in the face of these novelties of his time. And in doing so, pointed to the Holy Family - that is, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph - as an example to be followed by Christians as to an ideal for family life.

And far from being an overly ideal situation, we have Joseph, an older foster-father caring for a young wife and charged with the protection and raising of the Messiah - our Lord Jesus Christ.

As if that makes everything perfect. The Holy Family experienced some rather daunting difficulties which we hear of elsewhere in Scripture.

Almost immediately after Christ's birth, Joseph had to quickly flee the rage of the murderous King Herod - taking the small Child and His Mother to Egypt for safe-keeping. All of this without modern transportation, freeways, cars ... iPhones, GPS's, or even a paper map. And then a few years later, return to Nazareth ... hoping to pick up where they left off ... several years before.

And here we are today, on the Feast of the Holy Family - established by Pope Leo XIII 120 years ago who hoped to point us to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph ... the Holy Family ... as a guide for our own family life.

And in today's Gospel, we hear the familiar Bible story that is known as the "Finding in the Temple." The 12 year old boy Jesus is unknowingly left behind in Jerusalem by His parents. Within this well-known story, I would like to propose a concise solution for all of us in living out our Christian duties - as individuals, as couples, and within our families.

You see, when Joseph and Mary lost Jesus - they didn't even at first realize it. And when they did, they retraced their steps ... and eventually

they found Him ... they found Jesus again. But when they did finally find him, we can hear in their words how they've already lost focus.

*“Son, why have you done this to us?”*

Do you see it? They lose Jesus for a couple of days, and already ... it is all about them.

Yet when they say this to Jesus, He gently reminds them that He was merely in His *“Father’s house”* where He thought He should be.

In our own lives - as individuals and as families - we may not even notice when and if we lose our focus on Christ ... but when we do, we begin to focus in on ourselves. All of a sudden, relationships start to fray, and it seems that everything ... is happening ... to us.

And the solution is found *“in [our] Father’s house”* ... when we find ourselves ... once again ... in the Presence of our Lord and Savior ... Jesus Christ.

Our situations - whatever they may be - can be transformed ... when we place ourselves in the Presence of Christ. When we turn our focus from ourselves ... back toward Jesus. Then we will find the love and mercy and grace that we need to live out our Baptismal promises and our Christian commitments ... both within our family and in the world.

In a few moments we will make our Profession of Faith. Let us say these words with renewed awareness and vigor ... realizing anew our own Baptismal graces ... and the power they hold to change us.

And as we approach this altar to receive the Most Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us pray that we might ... in re-committing ourselves to Christ ... always keep our focus on Jesus Christ ... and Him alone ... and allow Christ to once more save us ... and ask Him to bring salvation to all of our relationships ... and to our families ... and our communities ... our nation ... and the whole world.

May Jesus Christ ... be for us the Light of our world ... the Light of our lives ... the Light of our families. Let us ask Him ... our Savior ... to save us ... each and every one of us ... every moment ... of every day.