

~From the Administrator~

December 27, 2009

Dear Parish Family,

This week has been a busy one, setting up for Christmas. I want to thank all the people whose efforts contributed to the BEAUTIFUL decorations in the church and the gathering area. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

On Tuesday, two Masses of Christian burial were held. The first for Michael William Riley, 63, who was branch manager for the Secretary of State in Mt. Pleasant for the past 23 years. The second for Darlene A. Block Riley, a lifetime resident of the area. Darlene is survived by six children, twenty-one grandchildren, and fifteen great-grandchildren; and three more great-grandchildren on the way.

Please remember to pray for the repose of their souls, and the consolation of their families and friends.

ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO THEM, O LORD. AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM. MAY THEIR SOULS, AND THE SOULS OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED REST IN PEACE. AMEN.

I have tried to keep up with my Christmas cards, and hope that most of them arrived before Christmas!

In the secular world, Christmas starts sometime between Halloween and Thanksgiving, and ends on Christmas Eve. As Catholics, that time is Advent; and for us Christmas begins on December 25, and continues for the first eight days with what is called the 'Octave of Christmas.' Those eight days are celebrated in the liturgy as if they were all Christmas. Then there are four more days leading up to the Feast of Epiphany, when we commemorate the coming of the three wise men to adore the Christ Child.

So, for the next week or so, keep up the Christmas spirit. And let us keep each other in prayer.

Merry Christmas to all! May God bless you!

Fr. David

A Prayer for the Family

Jesus, our most loving redeemer, You came to enlighten the world with your teaching and example. You willed to spend the greater part of Your life in humble obedience to Mary and Joseph in the home of Nazareth. In this way, You sanctified that family, which was to be an example for all Christian families. Graciously accept our family, which we dedicate and consecrate to You this day. Be pleased to protect, guard, and keep it in holiness, in peace, and in the harmony of Christian charity. By conforming ourselves to the Divine model of Your family, may we attain to eternal happiness. Amen.

The Feast of the Holy Family

The Feast of the Holy Family is a liturgical celebration in the Church in honor of Jesus of Nazareth, his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and his foster father, Saint Joseph, as a family.

Veneration of the Holy Family was formally begun in the 17th century by Mgr François de Laval, a Canadian bishop who founded the Confraternity of the Holy Family.

The feast of the Holy Family was instituted by Pope Leo XIII in 1893 on the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany; that is to say, on the Sunday between January 7 through January 13.

Pope Paul VI moved the feast to the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, between Christmas and New Year's Day (both exclusive), or when there is no Sunday within the Octave (if both Christmas Day and New Year's Day are Sundays), it is held on 30 December, a Friday in such years.

+ + A Reflection on the Holy Family + +

The Holy Family is the name given to the family unit of Jesus: The Divine Son of God Jesus, his mother Mary, and his foster-father Joseph. We know very little about the life of the Holy Family through the Canonical Scriptures. They speak of the early years of the Holy Family, including the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt, and the finding of Jesus in the temple. Various non-canonical works, including the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, try to fill in the blanks. However, even though these apocryphal works may contain some truth from oral tradition, they have been deemed unworthy of canonical status because of the way they present Jesus. While the exact details of the day-to-day life of the Holy Family may be unknown, we can still learn a lot from the stories we do have.

Devotion to the Holy Family is a recent development, but one that naturally grows out of a love for Jesus and his family. The devotion to the Holy Family grew in popularity in the 17th century, and several religious congrega-

tions have been founded under this title. The Holy Family also became portrayed in popular art of the period. On October 26, 1921 the Congregation of Rites under Pope Benedict XV inserted the Feast of the Holy Family into the Latin Rite general calendar. Until then it had been celebrated regionally. Popes before and including Benedict XV (especially Leo XIII) promoted the feast as a way to counter the breakdown of the family unit.

The Feast of the Holy Family is not just about the Holy Family, but about our own families too. The main purpose of the Feast is to present the Holy Family as the model for all Christian families, and for domestic life in general. Our family life becomes sanctified when we live the life of the Church within our homes. This is called the "domestic church" or the "church in miniature." St. John Chrysostom urged all Christians to make each home a "family church," and in doing so, we sanctify the family unit. Just how does one live out the Church in the family? The best way is by making Christ and his Church the

center of family and individual life. Ways to do this include: reading scripture regularly, praying daily, attending Mass at least on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, imitating the actions of the Holy Family, and so forth, all done together as a family unit. In addition to cultivating positive actions, the Church understands that various actions and behaviors are contrary to God's Divine plan for the family, and these should be avoided.

The Holy Family feast is a good time to remember the family unit and pray for our human and spiritual families. We also may take this feast to reflect on the value and sanctity of the family unit, and to evaluate our own family life. What ways may it be improved? What would Jesus, Mary, and Joseph do? Finally, we can use this feast to ask ourselves what are we doing to promote the family within our own cultures, neighborhoods, and communities.

A pious practice is to write "J.M.J" at the top of letters and personal notes as a reference to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as the Holy Family