

Fr. Rudy's Reflections  
Feast of the Holy Family  
December 31, 2023

## Love Changes Everything

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Today, as we contemplate the end of the calendar year, let us consider what might be ahead for us in the next and how we might truly grow in faith and love. For example, all of us, in one way or another, have deep roots, influences, and resultant attitudes about our family. Whether we come from a traditional, ideal, and loving environment or something more challenging and complex in its arrangement, we have been affected (and continue to be affected) by these relationships—in how we treat ourselves and in how we treat others. As the old adage goes, “Children learn by what they live.”

Yet, we are called as Christians to always wear a mantle of love in all we do, by being compassionate, kind, generous, humble, and in all other expressions of love. Despite hurt, disappointment, and yes, sorrow, about our past and present, do we demonstrate a loving heart only when it is easy to do, especially with regard to certain members of family? If we disagree with them for whatever reason, are we automatically poised to suppress and withhold our love for them? Are we kind only to those relatives who align with our thoughts and values? And because we might have taken offence with others, do we unconsciously embody the old adage, “Hurt people hurt people?” In this season of Christmas, we should honestly examine our conscience, so we may transform our hearts—with love—which can ultimately change everything we do for the better.

Today is the Feast of the Holy Family, a name given to the family unit of Jesus, his mother Mary, and his foster father Joseph, who represent in every way the perfect example of family life for us. The Feast, which commemorates their life together, developed in Western civilization at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Canada and then extended to the entire Church. It was formally recognized and instituted in 1921 under Pope Benedict XV and is celebrated on the Sunday following Christmas. As we strive to make Christ and his teachings—the Good News—the center of our lives, let us emulate the model of the Holy Family for inspiration and comfort, as we deal with our day-to-day relationships within our family. To live the gospel of the family, although sometimes not easy, will help us rediscover our faith in the commonplace moments of life and love those with whom we might have our dearest and deepest bonds.

*“Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love; to you we turn with trust. Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer. Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division; may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing. Holy Family of Nazareth, make us once more mindful of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God’s plan. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.”—Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia, 325*

Yours in Christ,  
Father Rudy