

## WE ARE FAMILY

On Sunday, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Let us use this opportunity to reflect on the importance of all families.

Family is the seed of society, as Catholic teaching reminds us. It is the basic unit of society and *the* fundamental example of basic community.

It is in this context, then, and the culture of ancient Israel, that Sirach wrote his instructions for family living. His instructions emphasize an element of Israel's faith to respect one's parents, with the reminder of the special favor we find with God when we honor our parents when they become infirmed.



Applying the principle of Sirach's instructions to modern society, we continue to honor the culture of the family (whatever it is). The success or decline of society is defined by the success or decline of the family. Therefore, society needs families to succeed.

Raising a family is hard. Even with support systems, raising a family is hard.

Many don't even have a support system.

That's not right, as the Catechism tells us: "**The family must be helped and defended by appropriate social measures.** Where families cannot fulfill their responsibilities, other social bodies have the duty of helping them and of supporting the institution of the family" (*CCC, Compendium, 2209*).

Social measures could include parish support groups and expanded public programs such as Earned Income Tax Credit, Employment-Related Child Care subsidies and the Child Tax Credit.

Imagine the stress on a family without support. "While stress is an inevitable part of life ... children need support from parents to learn how to respond to stress in a physically and emotionally healthy manner." Parents need support from society that allows them to concentrate on creating a supportive environment, for as Pope Benedict wrote, "The family, the first cell of human society, remains the primary training ground for harmonious relations at every level of coexistence, human, national and international" (*Message for the 2011 World Day of Peace*).

Harmonious relations are achieved by following St. Paul instructions for a moral life, which he juxtaposes with living as a Christian family. He emphasizes the virtues of love, peace, "heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."

This is how a perfect family lives. Jesus, Mary and Joseph had the support of angels and community. Today's family also needs angels, community ..., and family-centric public policies.

(Readings for the Feast of the Holy Family)