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FAITH FOCUS - A Tale of Two Families

How does an innocent child grow into an adult who thinks that murdering children is a swell idea?

In the dysfunctional Herod family, the kids learned it at home... from mom and dad and grandpa. Even before the slaughter of the innocents, their vices had the makings of a grisly TV mini-series. Regicide, patricide, fratricide and now infanticide... they did 'em all. Killing rivals, fathers, brothers, wives, children: it was all in a day's work. And in between they were into double-barreled incest with Herodias and Salome covering up the crime by beheading John the Baptist. It was royal business as usual in the days of Caligula and Tiberius.

What set the Herod clan apart from these other monsters was their serial betrayal of God and his

chosen people. The self-proclaimed “King of the Jews” was, in fact, Rome’s lapdog. And worse yet, Herod was an eager and willing instrument of oppression and sacrilege. Then to mask his powerless, puppet status, he went on a building binge of tombs and temples, fortresses and palaces... all supported by outrageous taxes that ground God’s people into the dust. That was the Herod family paradigm... power and pleasure at any cost. The chosen people of God were there to be used, abused, betrayed... whatever it took to get the next bauble, to feel the next thrill, to curry Rome’s favor.

Then there was The Holy Family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. And the contrast could not be greater... giving rather than taking, loving rather than lusting. The Blessed Mother Mary, whose soul magnified the Lord, gave herself to God as an instrument of our salvation. The righteous, faithful Joseph lived to serve. He gave God his unquestioning obedience in the face of danger and hardship. And finally, what greater contrast than Jesus Christ, God and man; he had it all and he gave it all... in loving obedience to the Father.

And so we have the example of two entirely different families in this week's gospel. The family of Jesus lives to love God and serve neighbor. The family of Herod wants all of life's goodies and they will do anything to get them and keep them. Which family do we follow?

For most of us I suspect the answer is a hybrid. We profess the Holy Family as our ideal. But as a matter of expediency, at times there is more than a little Herod in our homes than we care to admit. That doesn't mean patricide and all the rest, but it does come down to a question of priorities. Do we live to serve or be served? Are we givers or takers? Do we live to glorify God or satisfy the almighty me?

These are questions for which God will hold each one of us individually responsible. But the answers do not spring up spontaneously from the void. They are shaped in the context of loving, Christian (and that means actively Christ-centered) families. They are a sacred legacy of family values held in trust to be passed down lovingly to successive generations. They are fostered in energized, evangelical parish families who live consciously and constantly in the love of Christ.

As parents, as grandparents, as members of the parish family... how seriously do we take our responsibility to raise a new generation of disciples... ready, willing and able to take their place in the Body of Christ. We would be outraged if anyone accused us of neglecting our children. We provide food, shelter, healthcare, education and entertainment. But how much time and how much attention do we give to nourishing the souls of our loved ones? When was the last time your family prayed together? When was the last time you opened the Bible and shared the Word of God?

By our example are we starving our families on a junk-food diet of marginal Christianity? Or are we building champions for Christ? The choice is ours. Carpe Diem. Seize the day. Stand with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Make yours a Holy Family. *Choose you this day whom you will serve...As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

[Click Link for Luke 2:41-52](#)