

FEBRUARY



THE MONTH DEDICATED TO THE HOLY FAMILY

February is the month dedicated to the Holy Family. Though the start of the Lenten season changes within the calendar year, a fair-sized portion of February gives us a space of time between the Christmas celebrations and the increased focus on Jesus's public life and ministry, which occurs in Lent. It is a transition from the feast of Christmas to the fasting of Lent. Therefore traditionally February has become a time to recall the Holy Family; within the Holy Family is where Jesus spent the time between his birth and embarking on his public journey.

The Holy Family consists of the Child Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Saint Joseph. Veneration of the Holy Family was formally begun in the 17th century by Saint François de Laval, the first bishop of New France, who founded a Confraternity.

We know very little about the life of the Holy Family through the Gospels. Matthew and Luke narrate the episodes from this period of Christ's life, namely his Circumcision and later Presentation, the Flight to Egypt, the return to Nazareth, and the Finding in the Temple. 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.

Since the 16th century Catholic piety has assigned entire months to special devotions. The month of February has been primarily associated with the Holy Family. 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. Popes before and including Benedict XV (especially Leo XIII) promoted the feast as a way to counter the breakdown of the family unit. At the very outset of Christ's work on earth, God showed the world a family in which, as Pope Leo XIII teaches, "*all men might behold a perfect model of domestic life, and of all virtue and holiness.*" **The harmony, unity, and holiness which characterized this Holy Family make it the model for all Christian families.**

Since the 1969 revision of the General Roman Calendar, the feast is celebrated on the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, the Sunday between Christmas Day and New Year's Day (both exclusive), or if both Christmas Day and the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God are Sundays, on 30 December (always a Friday in such years). It is a holy day of obligation only if it falls on a Sunday.

The feast was instituted by Pope Leo XIII in 1893 and set on the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany; that is to say, on the Sunday between January 7 through January 13, all inclusive (see General Roman Calendar of 1960). The 1962 Roman Missal, whose use is still authorized, follows the General Roman Calendar of 1960, which has the celebration on that date.



PRAYERS TO THE HOLY FAMILY

- **FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

Grant unto us, Lord Jesus, ever to follow the example of Thy holy Family, that in the hour of our death Thy glorious Virgin Mother together with blessed Joseph may come to meet us and we may be worthily received by Thee into everlasting dwellings: who lives and reigns world without end. Amen. *Roman Missal*

- **CONSECRATION TO THE HOLY FAMILY**

O Jesus, our most loving Redeemer, who having come to enlighten the world with Thy teaching and example, didst will to pass the greater part of Thy life in humility and subjection to Mary and Joseph in the poor home of Nazareth, thus sanctifying the Family that was to be an example for all Christian families, graciously receive our family as it dedicates and consecrates itself to Thee this day. Do Thou defend us, guard us and establish amongst us Thy holy fear, true peace, and concord in Christian love: in order that, by conforming ourselves to the divine pattern of Thy family, we may be able, all of us without exception, to attain to eternal happiness.

Mary, dear Mother of Jesus and Mother of us, by thy kindly intercession make this our humble offering acceptable in the sight of Jesus, and obtain for us His graces and blessings.

O Saint Joseph, most holy guardian of Jesus and Mary, assist us by thy prayers in all our spiritual and temporal necessities; that so we may be enabled to praise our divine Saviour Jesus, together with Mary and thee, for all eternity.

Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be, three times.

- **IN HONOR OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

O God, heavenly Father, it was part of Thine eternal decree that Thine only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, should form a holy family with Mary, His blessed mother, and His foster father, Saint Joseph. In Nazareth home life was sanctified, and a perfect example was given to every Christian family. Grant, we beseech Thee, that we may fully comprehend and faithfully imitate the virtues of the Holy Family so that we may be united with them one day in their heavenly glory. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.