

Sunday June 10, 2018: Family Troubles

In this morning's Gospel we find Jesus, a thirty's something accomplished teacher. Then in the midst of one very difficult teaching, his family shows up and creates a disruptive scene. ---- As if it wasn't enough to have the scribes out to kill him, Jesus was also having family problems.

His family was there to restrain him for they had heard and apparently believed rumors that he was losing his mind. Someone interrupted his teaching, "Look, your mother and your brothers and sisters are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"

Then indicating his disciples, he adds; "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

When I was a child I used to watch a television show called Ozzie & Harriet. The Nelsons were always happy, they wore nice clothes all the time. Ozzie wore a tie, dress shirt and cardigan – my dad wore bib overalls.

The Nelsons lived in a beautiful house on a beautiful street in a beautiful neighborhood, they were never sick or tired or lonely, or angry, - Rickie and David didn't fight like my brothers and I did. They didn't call one another bad names. That family smiled a lot more than my family did, everyone was always treated fairly and they never needed anything.

I can remember naively thinking, "Now that's the way a family is supposed to be. I was just a little kid, television was brand new and I didn't know any better, but that was just a TV show – it was not real life. In real life all families – all families have problems.

Today a rather significant segment of the church at large, finds itself caught up in the political concept of "American family values." Much of what it hypes as "Christian Family Values" is really more Ozzie and Harriet that it is scriptural.

Our Bible is not a book of fairy tales, it is a book of truth and the truth is - families have problems. By human standards, we find no perfect families in the Bible. – in fact - I find a persistent over-whelming theme of family trouble throughout Holy Scripture.

Of course, the whole idea of 'the family' gets off to a really lousy start with two brothers named Cain and Abel. Then there's Noah. After that family survived the flood - Noah became an alcoholic and caused all sorts of very ugly problems for his family – but then we seldom read that story beyond the rainbow. In real life, somewhere over the rainbow can be found family strife.

Jacob seemed like a good dad, but he played favorites with his children. He loved Joseph more than his other sons – this quite naturally hurt the others and caused them to hate Joseph. So they threw their brother Joseph in a pit and just left him there for the slave-traders.

King David was not a good husband. He caused some awful family dilemmas. He made a lot of mistakes as a husband and as a Father and his son Absalom was neither a good son nor a good brother.

In the interest of time I must leave so many Bible families out of this troubled list. Two sisters, Mary and Martha, two overly ambitious brother's James and John – the sons of thunder, and on and on. Our personal family problems pale in comparison to some of these stories.

There is one family though, I can't leave out. A perfect God stepped into human history. And wouldn't you just know it; He did so as part of a family...He chose to become personally involved in one particular little family, and what a family that was.!

First there was God almighty himself, creator of the universe, then there was an unwed pregnant teenage girl, and then a very *suspect* older man named Joseph – a strange one – known to others as a dreamer of dreams.

Let's see, that's a dad, a step-dad, a teen-age girl and a newborn baby all staying in a smelly barn. Not exactly your typical modern day American-culture stereo-type of what a Christian family is supposed to be. Today we call that family, "The Holy Family."

But we would surely report them to county social services. The baby would be hauled off to foster parents, Joseph would probably face some very serious criminal charges, and who would believe the girl?

Who would believe Mary?

Against the backdrop of our own family struggles[, "We believe Christ became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man."