

Celebrating the Family

On December 29, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. Jesus Christ was born into a family whose roots can be traced back to the royal house of King David. There were 42 generations of ancestors before Jesus.

The family must have been very important to Jesus. He did not begin his public ministry until he was 33 years old. Before Jesus chose his twelve apostles and preached the gospel, he lived and worked with his family, Mary and Joseph. His foster-father, Joseph, was a simple carpenter who taught this trade to Jesus.



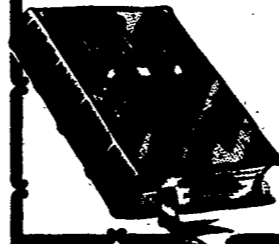
The holiday season is a good time for us to think about our own families. As followers of Jesus, we are part of the Christian family — the Church. But we have all been born into our own individual families. Our family is in itself a gift from God.

Our family is an ideal place in which we can learn and grow as people. We can share our gifts and develop our talents. It is in our family that we first learn how to love and be loved.

The following suggested activities will help you think about your family and your role in it. Don't forget to thank Jesus for giving you a special place in a family.

1) Compose a story about your family and your place in it:

Include a special page for each family member description and a photograph if possible. Try to describe what you think are the special talents of each person. Be sure to include some memorable events and incidents from vacations and special occasions. You might also want to write about humorous things that have happened in everyday life. Make a cover for your story out of construction paper and write a title for it. You can present your



Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone

story to your family as a New Year's Day gift.

2) Construct a family calendar:

You can make or buy a 12-month calendar for 1986. Include birthdays, anniversaries and upcoming events for family members. Your calendar can also be a type of family history if you mark the dates when special events have happened. Or, it can serve as a family diary if you mark special happenings all through 1986.

3) Make a family tree and trace your roots on it:

There are many books available at the public library on genealogy — the study of family ancestors. The tree can include as many generations and branches as you like. List birth dates, death dates, special occupations and achievements.

4) Celebrate your family:

Write a thank-you letter to your family for the particular things they

have done for you. What talents have they contributed to make your family a nice home?

5) Read about the family of Jesus in the Bible:

a. The coming of Jesus from the royal line of David is foretold in the Old Testament by the prophet Isaiah. Read Isaiah, chapter 11.

b. The 42 generations of ancestors of Jesus is found in Matthew 1: 1-17.

6) Reconciliation:

Reconciliation means to settle quarrels or differences. As 1985 draws to a close, it is important to forgive family members, and anyone else for that matter, who may have hurt you. It is a time for us to ask for forgiveness from someone we may have been offended by our words or actions. The end of 1985 should be used to think about the ways you can become a better family member and give of your time and talents, too.

Pope's message on peace

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organisms of the world community that will watch over the common good of all peoples.

It is clear that, in order effectively to achieve a unity of this kind, mental outlooks and political views contaminated by the lust for power ... must be abandoned and replaced by an openness to sharing and collaboration with all in a spirit of mutual trust.

That call to recognize the unity of the human family has very real repercussions for our life commitment to peace. It means first of all that we reject the kind of thinking that divides and exploits ... that we commit ourselves to a new solidarity ... of the human family. It means looking at the North-South tensions and replacing them with a new relationship, the social solidarity of all. This social solidarity faces up honestly to the abyss that exists today, but it does not acquiesce in any kind of economic determinism.

It is true that changes in economic growth patterns have affected all parts of the world and not just the poorest. But the person who sees peace as a universal value will want to use this opportunity to reduce the differences between North and South and foster the relationships that will bring them closer together... I am thinking of so many elements that individually have created tensions and which combined together have polarized North-South relations. All this can and must be changed.

If social justice is the means to move toward a peace for all peoples, then it means that we see peace as an indivisible fruit of just and honest relations on every level ... This conversion to an attitude of social solidarity also serves to highlight the deficiencies in the current East-West situation. In my message to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on disarmament, I explored many of the elements needed to improve the situation between the two major power blocs of East and West. All of the measures recommended ... rest on the solidarity of the human family traveling together along the path of dialogue...

Today this dialogue is more needed than ever. Left to themselves, weapons and weapons systems, military strategies and alliances become the instruments of intimidation, mutual recrimination and the consequent dread that affects so much of the human race today. Dialogue considers these instruments in their relationship to human life. I am thinking first of all of the various dialogues in Geneva that are seeking to negotiate reductions and limitations in armaments. But also there are the dialogues being conducted in the context of the multilateral process initiated with the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, a process which will be reviewed once again next year in Vienna and continued...

I am thinking too of the kinds of dialogue that take place when borders are open and people can travel freely ... when one culture is enriched by contact with another culture,

when scholars are free to communicate, when workers are free to assemble, when young people join forces for the future, when the elderly are reunited with their loved ones... The more we discover one another, the more we can replace the tensions of the past with bonds of peace.

5. New relationships built on solidarity and dialogue

In the spirit of solidarity and with the instruments of dialogue we will learn:

- Respect for every human person.
- Respect for the true values and cultures of others.
- Respect for the legitimate autonomy and self-determination of others.
- To look beyond ourselves in order to understand and support the good of others.
- To contribute our own resources ... for the development and growth that come from equity and justice.
- To build the structures that will ensure that social solidarity and dialogue are permanent features of the world we live in.

The tension born of the two blocs will be successfully replaced by the interconnected relations of solidarity and dialogue when we learn to insist on the primacy of the human person. The dignity of the person and the defense of his or her human rights are in the balance because they always suffer in one way or another from those tensions and distortions of the blocs...

6. The Christian vision and commitment

My brothers and sisters in the Christian faith find in Jesus Christ, in the gospel message and in the life of the Church lofty reasons and even more inspiring motives for striving to bring about one single peace in today's world. The Christian faith has as its focus Jesus Christ, who stretches out his arms on the cross in order to unite the children of God who were scattered (cf. John 11:52), to break down the walls of division (cf. Ephesians 2:14), and to reconcile the peoples in fraternity and peace. The cross raised above the world symbolically embraces and has the power to reconcile North and South, East and West.

Christians, enlightened by faith, know that sin is the ultimate reason that the world is the scene of divisions, tensions, rivalries, blocks and unjust inequalities ... But Christians also know that the grace of Christ, which can transform this human condition, is continually being offered to the world, since "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Romans 5:20). The Church, which carries on Christ's work and dispenses His redeeming grace, has precisely as Her purpose the reconciling of all individuals and peoples in unity, fraternity and peace.

"The promotion of unity," says the Second Vatican Council, "belongs to the innermost nature of the Church, since She is, by Her relationship with Christ, both a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of

all mankind" ("Gaudium et Spes," 42).

This vision and these demands ... should above all cause all Christians to become more aware of situations that are out of harmony with the gospel, in order to purify and rectify them. At the same time, Christians should recognize and value the positive signs attesting that efforts are being made to remedy these situations, efforts they must effectively support, sustain and strengthen.

Animated by a lively hope, capable of hoping against hope (cf. Romans 4:18), Christians must go beyond the barriers of ideologies and systems ... In this regard, I would like to say a word of appreciation and praise to all those who are engaged in international volunteer work ...

7. International Year of Peace and final appeal

Dear friends, brothers and sisters all: At the beginning of a new year I renew my appeal to all of you to put aside hostilities, to break the fetters of the tensions that exist in the world. I appeal to you to turn those tensions of North and South, East and West into new relationships of social solidarity and dialogue...

GeVa's gift

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Whether from the inside looking out, or the outside looking in, the window GeVa opens for us reveals a "Christmas present" to the entire community that echoes the one Charles Dickens himself bestowed on 19th-century Rochester more than a hundred years ago. Sister Pat Carrigan tells the story of Dickens' appearance here in the 1860s, on the stage of the Corinthian Theater, now the site of the Rochester Plaza Hotel downtown. Dickens came to Rochester during a national tour, and gave a dramatic reading of *A Christmas Carol* in which he played all the roles himself. "In the Fezziwig scene, his fingers became the people who were dancing," she reveals. "He was very irascible and shrunken as Scrooge, ebullient as Fezziwig."

Dickens is known to have barnstormed England as well, giving 83 performances in a single year. "The week before he died, he said his one great dream was to have a theater company," says Sister Pat. Although Dickens wasn't successful as a playwright, he collaborated on a number of plays and acted in leading roles. "He would serve as director, actor, and overseer of the carpentry," she adds. "He and playwright Leigh Hunt presented *Every Man and His Humour* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and raised a large amount of money for an arts and literature guild to support impoverished writers and actors. When he gave these readings in the final years of his life, the lines in New York were sometimes a mile long. They sold tickets for 13 times their normal price."

Dickens' enormous popularity in his



own lifetime was a gratifying preview of the enduring popularity of his work. Creating worlds for the transitory moment of their life onstage reminds us of the ephemeral nature of the worlds we create for ourselves — until, as William Blake wrote, some "immortal hand or eye (frames their) fearful symmetry."

This Christmas season, GeVa gives back to us the gift of our own collective reflection in the mirror of the stage. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come reveals an even rosier tableau for the foreseeable future. If all proceeds according to plan and the costumes still fit next December, *A Christmas Carol* should become an annual GeVa tradition, much in the spirit of the Eastman Theater's yearly *Nutcracker* ballet.

With that happy eventuality in mind, there's nothing more to add but a rousing chorus of Tiny Tim's parting words: "God bless us, every one!"