

## Take steps to become a holy family

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

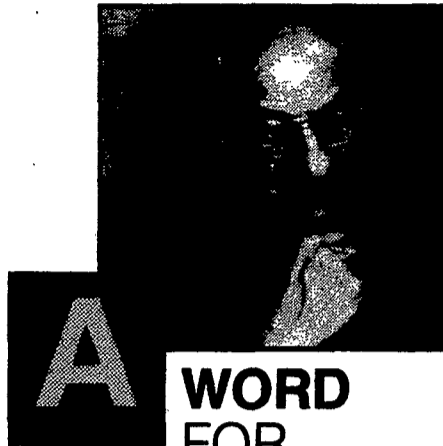
**Sunday's Readings:** (R3) Luke 2:22-40; (R1) Sirach 3:2-6,12-14; (R2) Colossians 3:12-21.

A family is a society instituted by God himself. It comprises a father, mother, and children. For the family to be happy, it must be holy. It will only be holy when each of its members are so.

Children can solve their personality problems when the home is a place of security and love.

Children need discipline and self-mastery, because one day they will have to face a world that will not bend to their every wish and whim. This discipline must come from both parents. Parents should read the 30th chapter of the book of Sirach on the training of children.

Here's one verse: "Pamper your child and he will be a terror for you, indulge him and he will bring you grief" (30:9). Welfare and totalitarianism are both bad forms of government. So is parental guidance that provides too much or dictates too much. Virtue takes the middle course.



### WORD FOR SUNDAY

Parental discipline should be firm: mean what you say and say what you mean. It should be fair: limitations imposed from love, neither too severe nor too lenient. It should be consistent: children become secure when they know the rules and boundaries. Discipline is not meant to satisfy the one giving it, but to mend the offender; not to hurt so much as to heal; not for vengeance,

but for cure.

Besides security, children need love. In the 13th century Frederick II brought together a number of abandoned children and put them in the care of nurses, who were instructed never to speak a word to the children, nor show any facial emotion or gesture of love. Frederick wanted to find out what language they would speak. The experiment failed. All the children died for want of love.

Love means caring. Loving parents care for their children's physical needs (food, clothing and shelter), emotional needs (acceptance, hugs, kisses, a frequent "I love you"), intellectual needs (answering questions, listening, taking them to interesting places and events), and spiritual needs (seeing that they attend church every Sunday, go to religious instruction, learn their prayers, the family rosary, grace before and after meals, good example). "Instruct a child in the way he should go, and when he grows old, he will not leave it" (Proverbs 22:6).

As Will Durant once said: "You can take the child out of the home, but you cannot take the home out of the child."

Parents are the bow; their children are the arrows. The target is heaven. God has made a crown for each child in heaven. Parents must help them get that crown, hit the target.

Finally, children must be obedient. Jesus was to Mary and Joseph for 30 years. Although He knew more than they did, He obeyed them. He dreamed of leaving home early. The incident in the temple betrays a certain restlessness. Yet He waited 30 years to teach children to be patient and obedient. Thus He grew in size and strength, filled with wisdom, and God's grace.

Lastly, the family is meant to teach us to live with others. Charity begins at home. That means we ought to learn to love others at home — especially the unlovable. It is the kiss of death if children can't learn to get along with people, for in life what they will encounter only people.

The church is a family, the world is meant to be a family. But this will never be unless the home is a family. And this will only be if we learn to get along with each other in the family. To do so is the first step in the family becoming a holy family.



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