



Reflection from Ben Babaran

As we gather to celebrate this Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we are invited to “fear not” and we also are invited to put on “heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”

The readings of this Sunday speak to us about promises - promises that have been fulfilled! There are two choices for the First Reading – from the Book of Genesis or from the Book of Sirach. Genesis tells how God fulfilled his promise, giving Sarah and Abraham a child. While in the Gospel, God fulfilled his promise to Simeon and prophetess Anna - Simeon did not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.

Promises are also made in our families. Sometimes they are fulfilled, sometimes not. Our families might not be perfect. But God assures us “Fear not...I am your shield.” In addition, the list of virtues St. Paul asks us to put on should help us through our imperfections and personal difficulties.

Then, there is this passage from the Gospel: “When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.” Putting this together with the Book of Sirach which stresses the honor and respect for others especially our parents and elders, we get another message – that we need to invest more of our time in our family life.

I have been dwelling on the latter message for a couple of months now. For Filipinos, or Asians and Pacific Islanders, family life is very important. Our families are closely knit. However, the message is more pronounced when you lose a family member. In October, Jo lost her brother to lung cancer. Last week, I lost a cousin from breast cancer, and I am writing this reflection while in Chicago attending her funeral services.

As we close the year and start making new year’s resolutions, may God who is Emmanuel (God-is-with-us) help us prioritize spending time with our loved ones. May the Feast of the Holy Family open our eyes to see the poor families of our day. They are family to us, too!

Here’s to 2024 blessed with peace, joy, and good health.

Peace,

Ben