

Jesus, Mary and Joseph are the model for all families. They struggled with authority and obedience, but they thrived on love. When I was a child attending Catholic schools, our teachers had us write on the top of every page of homework the initials J.M.J. – for Jesus, Mary and Joseph. As children, we never did any schoolwork without reminding ourselves of the ideal parent/child relationship.

The Bible says very little about the early years of Jesus' life. So our second reading today comes from a different part of the Bible and speaks about a different kind of holy family – not Jesus, Mary and Joseph, but God the Father, Jesus the Son and the children of God – namely, you and me. We are a holy family. John says in his first letter, “See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. And so we are.” Some people in John's day did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, so John says you can hardly expect them to believe that Christians are God's children. But we are.

In one sense, everyone is a child of God, just as we say that all people are our brothers and sisters. But believers especially are called children of God because of God's special gift of love for us.

We are God's children now, but we shall be something even more at the end. John says we shall see God as he is and we shall be like God. We don't know more about life then because we do not completely know God now. We trust the future God has in store, even though God is somewhat mysterious. But we trust the future with our best friends, even though we do not completely know them.

One way to know people even more is to meet their family. Meeting someone's parents tells us about that person's primary influences. Coming to know the siblings shows how one person differentiates from others. Learning someone's choice of a spouse and how they raise their children reveals their loves and their values. We get to know individuals when we come to know their family.

On Holy Family Sunday, the church invites us to know more about God by coming to know God's family. When we see who God loves as children, and how God raises them, we learn more about God. That will help us love other people, even those we don't especially like. It will also strengthen our trust that we will share fully

some day in the mysterious divine presence, when we see God as he really is.