

St. Matthew says that the reason the Holy Family moved from Egypt to Nazareth was to fulfill a prophecy. Not because they had friends there, not because Joseph got transferred, and not because starter homes were going cheap. He says Joseph settled in Nazareth so that what was said through the prophets was fulfilled. "He (meaning the Messiah) shall be called a Nazorean." There's only one problem. There is no such prophecy in the whole Old Testament; it seems like Matthew just made it up. "A woman shall bear a child"--that's there; "Out of Egypt I have called my son"--that's there; "Bethlehem will be great"--that's there. But not a word about Nazareth. It seems like Matthew just got on a roll and figured the best way to end this section was with another good prophecy, even if there wasn't one at all.

Why did the Holy Family move to Nazareth? Admittedly, this is not one of the burning issues of our day, but the most reasonable conclusion is they were from there and they were proud of it. In fact, Jesus was known as "Jesus of Nazareth." They even crucified him under the name of the city he was from: Jesus of Nazareth, "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum," king of the Jews.

We're in a more mobile society. People don't know us as ~~Paul of Kansas City, Clara of Raytown, or Sharyn of Lee's Summit.~~ And yet we know that what will help our families and our cities is strong neighborhoods. A church like ours depends upon our commitment to the parish and the community. When we prepare couples for marriage or families for the baptism of their child, we hope we're fostering several commitments at once: a commitment to family, a commitment to God, a commitment to parish, and a commitment to community. Most of our members live right around here, but some live a bit of distance away, and I deeply appreciate the commitment they make to worship here and support our school and community.

St. Regis offers a lot to our neighborhood. Our parish plan states that our first purpose is to provide a spiritual home for people who pray and seek God together. Our school believes in quality education, which includes spiritual formation, where children learn values and form themselves as outstanding leaders for tomorrow. We're proud of the ethnic mix of children in our school. Visitors familiar with other Catholic schools in the area concur that St. Regis is probably the most integrated school in the diocese. We're not perfect--for example, our total parish and school staff still does not reflect the racial integration of our neighborhood. But we're proud that this is a community that values humanity and draws inspiration from members of many races who call it home.

This Holy Family Sunday, one way we can help our families is to continue supporting our neighborhood and our parish, and make it our home.