

New Brighton, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## Holy Family

“Et erat súbditus illis.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

“Jesus was subject to them.”

On this first Sunday after Epiphany, the Church offers to our meditation and imitation the model of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The liturgy of the mass concludes with the same last words of the Gospel: “Jesus was subject to them.” How is it possible that God allows His own creatures to have dominion upon Him? Here, we are touching very closely to the Mystery of the Incarnation, and the preparation for the Mystery of Redemption.

Jesus is giving us the model of obedience we ought to follow. And Mary obeyed the divine order to rule over the Son. So speaks St. Bernard:

“Who was subject? And to whom? God to man! God, I repeat, to whom the Angels are subject, whom the Principalities and Powers do obey, was subject to Mary; and not only to Mary, but to Joseph also for Mary's sake. Marvel, therefore, both at God and man, and choose that which giveth greater wonder, whether it be the most loving condescension of the Son, or the exceeding great dignity of his Mother. Both amaze us, both are marvellous. That God should obey a woman is lowliness without parallel, that woman should rule over God, an elevation beyond comparison.”<sup>2</sup>

From the three holy members of the Holy Family, we learn the different levels of obedience, and therefore we submit our entire life to everlasting God: How to rule, how to be ruled, how to guide the rulers.

“To all fathers of families, Joseph is verily the best model of paternal vigilance and care. In the most holy Virgin Mother of God, mothers may find an excellent example of love, modesty, resignation of spirit, and the perfecting of faith. And in Jesus, who was subject to his parents, the children of the family have a divine pattern of obedience which they can admire, reverence, and imitate.”<sup>3</sup>

From the three of them, we may learn the perfect submission to God's everlasting decrees and providence, which governs us towards eternity. The feast of the Holy Family is an opportunity to renew our oath of fidelity to God, as He Himself gave us the example. Jesus shows us what kind of obedience he urges us to: a constant, faithful submission, which leads us on the way of perfection, until our death. For Him it was the death upon the Cross. For us, it will be the best way He chose according to our capacities and possibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Lk., II, 51. Holy Family, Gospel & Communion antiphon.

<sup>2</sup> St Bernard, *Homilia super Missus est*, n. 7-8, in *Roman Breviary*, for the Feast of the Holy Family.

<sup>3</sup> Leo XIII, Apostolic Letter *Neminem fugit*, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1892, in *Roman Breviary*, for the Feast of the Holy Family.

Jesus regards more the consistency of our obedience than the extraordinary things we may accomplish. Salvation is made of a sort of spiritual routine, which is a constant and renewed battle against our passions, to conform them to the ideal of holiness we are offered today.

“No one can doubt that in this Holy Family was displayed every virtue which can be called forth by an ordinary home life, with its mutual services of charity, its holy intercourse, and its practices of godly piety, since the Holy Family was destined to be a pattern to all others. For that very reason was it established by the merciful designs of Providence, namely, that every Christian, in every walk of life and in every place, might easily, if he would but give heed to it, have before him a motive and a pattern for the good life.”<sup>4</sup>

To manifest the importance of the virtue we ought to daily practice all along our life, the church repeats a second time the verse about the obedience of the Holy Child. At the time of communion, we are told these words which reveals the mystery of submission within the Holy Family. This is the submission of God made man to His own creatures, and through them, to the Father Creator. It also presents us the submission before the grace which just dwelt in our soul during communion, to make us one with Christ and with the Father.<sup>5</sup>

“All praise to Thee, O Jesus,  
who parents dost obey;  
Praise to the sovereign Father  
and Paraclete forever.”<sup>6</sup>

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> Leo XIII, Apostolic Letter *Neminem fugit*, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1892, in *Roman Breviary*, for the Feast of the Holy Family.

<sup>5</sup> Dom Ludovic Baron, l'expression du Chant grégorien. Feast of the Holy Family, Communion.

<sup>6</sup> *Roman Breviary*, Holy Family, Hymn for 2<sup>nd</sup> Vespers.