

Every now and then when my family gathers together, we pull out the family photos of yesterday. Of course, we always have to comment on the hair or the ugly clothing that someone was wearing at the time. When you look at yourself, you think, "Oh my goodness, what was I thinking? Did I actually wear that in public?"

One thing I've found about looking at old photos is that it gives you a sense of being family. You think of how much you gone through with your family – both the blessings in life and its sufferings.

As you know, marriage and family life are a vocation. That is, it is the way that most people will grow in holiness, to become saints. Saints don't just fall out of the sky like snowflakes. No, they grow up in ordinary families. Jesus Himself, we hear, returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph where He "became strong, filled with wisdom." The "hidden years" or the "family years" at Nazareth is where He prepared for His public ministry.

During his pontificate, our Holy Father has made some beautiful remarks about families. Here is what he said about moms and dads a couple of years ago, *"Let us consider so many mothers and fathers of families, who, with so much effort, raise their families, educate their children, carry on their daily work, bear their problems, but always with hope in Jesus, who do not strut about, but do what they can. They are the saints of daily life."* This is so very beautiful!

Our Holy Father reminds us that it's moms and dads who are the saints of everyday life. They are the heroes. Think about what moms and dads do on a regular basis: clean dirty diapers, wipe drooling mouths, and pick up messy rooms. They enforce rules and reinforce broken hearts. They help with homework, bandage wounded knees, and lead by example. And while what happens in ordinary family life rarely makes the nightly news, it's the place where saints are made.

In short, what parents do on a daily basis and what happens in families is critically important. In fact, family life is the arena where God does His most of His beautiful work. God's Kingdom grows through ordinary people and family life.

It's interesting Luke begins the chapter of today's gospel with the great a mighty Caesar Augustus. Caesar had all the power, wealth, and honor. In fact, cities even built Temples to honor him.

And yet, Luke only mentions him briefly. Instead, he focuses his intention on a poor peasant couple from Nazareth. His heart is with this family, and through this couple, He will shower His love on the world.

Today, we hear about two more people, Simeon and Anna, insignificant in the world's eyes, but great in God's eyes. They are what scholars sometimes call, the *anawim* – "the little ones."

We hear that Simeon is devout and awaits the consolation of Israel. He waits. In other words, he is a man of hope. He realizes that God has more in store for Israel.

Think of your own families. Given that we are fallen, there is much brokenness in your families. Words said that you regret. Actions you are not proud of. Pains that you carry. It's ironic that those closest to us – our children, siblings, parents, are oftentimes those we struggle to love the most. Again and again, they stretch us and invite us to be patient and forgive.

Like Simeon, families must always live in hope – awaiting the consolation and abundant life God will share. In other words, regardless of where your family is, God always has more in store for your family.

Eventually, Simeon was able to lay his eyes on Jesus, whom he calls "his salvation." Again and again, families are invited to turn to Christ, who is their victory, their salvation. Jesus heals. Jesus helps us forgive. Jesus helps us be generous with those closest to us.

And then we have Anna. She is elderly (84) and a widow, never leaving the temple. She worships night and day with fasting and prayer. In other words, she clings to God and performs little acts of love. Here, we can say something about grandparents.

Oftentimes, grandparents carry the burden of loneliness and think, "Now that I am older, what can I do? Does what I do matter?" Anna and her life answer with a resounding "yes." What you do is really important! It has great value!

For many of you, your children and grandchildren no longer practice their faith. And for some, they are living in a way that breaks your heart. Anna reminds you to never give up hope. Like Anna, every day you can pray, asking, "Lord, bless my children. Bless my grandchildren. Help them to experience or re-experience your profound love, your salvation. Show them Jesus that gazing upon Him, they will know you are merciful, tender, forgiving, and have a plan for them."

Luke reminds us, then, that God delights in working through "little people," – little in the world's eyes, but great in God's eyes – Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna – to reveal His love and bring about His Kingdom.

Today, these "little people" – the saints of everyday life and the heroes of our day – are moms, dads, children, brothers, sisters, grandpas, grandmas, who as Pope Francis says, do not strut about, but do what they can – to make the saints of today and tomorrow, and to build up His Kingdom. On behalf of a grateful priest, thank you for what

you do everyday for your children and grandchildren. May God bless you!