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JMJ

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate the Holy Family this Sunday, I was reminded of the pious practice of writing JMJ at the top of the page. This comes to us from a long tradition that was handed on mainly through our Catholic education system. Not having had a Catholic education myself, I was not introduced to the practice until I was at seminary and saw it on a classmate's paper in his notebook. I don't write out my homilies completely, but when I am preparing and jotting down notes, the first thing I do is mark JMJ at the top of the page.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are always eager and ready to help us on the way. The mere recalling of their presence in our lives and their example inspires us. At least once a day, and sometimes more often, I recite the prayer, "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I love you, save souls."

The Holy Family is the model for all families. As we ponder the love between Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, we are inspired to live lives in accord with that love, to pour ourselves out in love to each other, to give and not count the cost, to help each other whenever possible, to anticipate the needs of the other, etc.

Reflecting on the family as the primary place where we come to know God and are educated in His love, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI had these musings on Holy Family Sunday 2009:

Today's Liturgy presents the famous Gospel episode of the 12-year-old Jesus who stays behind in the Temple in Jerusalem unbeknown to His parents, who, surprised and anxious, discover him three days later conversing with the teachers. Jesus answers His Mother who asks for an explanation that He must "be in His Father's house" that is God's house (cf. Lk 2: 49). In this episode, the boy Jesus appears to us full of zeal for God and for the Temple. Let us ask ourselves: from whom did Jesus learn love for His Father's affairs? As Son, He certainly had an intimate knowledge of His Father, of God, and a profound and permanent relationship with Him but, in His own culture He had of course learned prayers and love for the Temple and for the Institutions of Israel from His parents. We may therefore say that Jesus' decision to stay on at the Temple was above all the result of His close relationship with the Father, but it was also a result of the education He had received from Mary and Joseph. Here, we can glimpse the authentic meaning of Christian education: it is the fruit of a collaboration between educators and God that must always be sought. The Christian family is aware that children are a gift and a project of God. Therefore, it cannot consider that it possesses them; rather, in serving God's plan through them, the family is called to educate them in the greatest freedom, which is precisely that of saying "yes" to God in order to do His will. The Virgin Mary is the perfect example of this "yes". Let us entrust all families to her, praying in particular for their precious educational mission.

Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,



Fr. Jack D. Shrum  
**Pastor**