

The Holy Family. (2017b)

A homily by Pope Paul VI

As far as we know, In 1964 Pope Paul VI became the first Pope to visit the Holy Land since St. Peter left that country to make his way towards Rome.

On January 5th of that year, he visited Nazareth, and in the Basilica of the Annunciation, built around a small house that is believed to be a house in which Mary lived together with Joseph and Jesus, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He preached a wonderful short homily, and if you haven't heard it before, it is worth listening to, or listening to a second time as well.

This is what he said:

The home of Nazareth is the school where we can begin to understand the life of Jesus – the school of the Gospel.

The first lesson we learn there is to look, to listen, to meditate and penetrate the meaning – at once so deep and so mysterious – of this very simple, very humble and very beautiful manifestation of the Son of God. Perhaps we learn, even imperceptibly, the lesson of imitation.

Here we learn the method which will permit us to understand who Christ is. Here above all is made clear the importance of taking into account the general picture of his life among us, with its varied background of place, of time, of customs, of language, of religious practices – in fact, everything Jesus made use of to reveal himself to the world. Here everything is eloquent, all has meaning.

Here, in this school, one learns why it is necessary to have a spiritual rule of life, if one wishes to follow the teaching of the Gospel and become a disciple of Christ.

How gladly would I become a child again, and go to school once more in this humble and sublime school of Nazareth: - - - close to Mary, I wish I could make a fresh start at learning the true science of life and the higher wisdom of divine truths.

But I am only a passing pilgrim. I must renounce this desire to pursue in this home my still incomplete education in the understanding of the Gospel.

I will not go on my way however without having gathered – hurriedly, as it true, and as if wanting to escape notice – some brief lessons from Nazareth.

First, then, a lesson of silence, May esteem for silence, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind, revive in us, besieged as we are by so many uplifted voices, the general noise and uproar, in our seething and over-sensitized modern life.

May the silence of Nazareth teach us recollection, inwardness, the disposition to listen to good inspirations and the teachings of true masters. May it teach us the need for and the value of preparation, of study, of meditation, of personal inner life, of the prayer which God alone sees in secret.

Next, there is a lesson on family life. May Nazareth teach us what family life is, its communion of love, its austere and simple beauty, and its sacred and inviolable character. Let us learn from Nazareth that the formation received at home is gentle and irreplaceable. Let us learn the prime importance of the role of the family in the social order.

Finally, there is the lesson of work. Nazareth, home of the 'Carpenter's Son', in you I would choose to understand and proclaim the severe and redeeming law of human work; here I would restore the awareness of the nobility of work; and affirm that work cannot be an end in itself, but that its freedom and its excellence derive, over and above its economic worth, from the value of those for whose sake it is undertaken.

And here at Nazareth, to conclude, I want to greet all the workers of the world, holding up to them their great pattern, their brother who is God. He is the prophet of all their just causes, Christ our Lord.

I could not have said it better.