A letter from the pastor...

Dear Parishioners:

There are times we think the ultimate question may be, "Who am I?" That should not surprise us in this hyper emphasis on individuality milieu. For many it's about me and my life, and they think freedom lies in a non-communitarian life style. Some even tell themselves, I might wed, but I can still make it about me.

On this feast of the Holy Family I'd like to propose a different question more in line with the image and likeness of God in which we are made. God is, by nature, a communion of persons and cannot exist merely as a committee in which they come to a consensus about what should be. They do not ask, "Who am I?" They ask, "Whose am I?" — to whom do I belong? Their individuality is so perfect that they could not exist as a singularity. St. Augustine's explanation points us to this understanding.

We are individuals with our own existence and personality, but we have never been nor ever will be mere individuals. We enter into a network of relationships throughout our lifetime as a son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife, father or mother, etc. We cannot exist without a network of relationships even if we claim otherwise. Denial of reality is a most dangerous attitude because it places us in a fantasy that asks others to go along with a non-reality.

Martin Luther uses the analogy of two horses in which one is ridden by God and the other by Satan. Our free will allows us to choose who our rider will be. God will always lead me into greater freedom while Satan will <u>always</u> ride me into slavery. In fact, Satan is so good at what he does that we will think we're on a freedom path until we decide the path of holiness is a better choice, and he will close the trap.

Our greatest freedom arises when one recognizes that my life is not my own but God's gift to me. It arises by embracing my truest identity which is always more than myself. We can learn from the example of the Holy Family who lived for each other not just themselves. Mary's annunciation, Jesus' birth, Joseph's dream et al. all point to persons living not their own plan, but God's.

We can learn to recognize more concretely God's plan for our lives by living generously through our family life, values and practices. The giving in to others with holy compromises builds secure habits that nurture boundaries that protect healthy relationships. Holy compromises recognize that it is not just about me but you as well. They show I love you and care for your journey to God, I choose to become an aid not an obstacle.

Holy compromises include, allowing others to watch their program, never being the reason your family is late, doing assigned chores without parental nagging, learning how to help cook and clean up, being pleasant in the morning, and other habits along these lines. Holy compromises generally do not require college degrees, but at times, require deeper degrees of love, kindness, tenderness, etc.

We should always remember that while mom and dad may not be Mary and Joseph, it is also important to remember that their child may not be Jesus either.

The truth is, when we strive to act as a member of the Holy Family, we raise the stakes for everyone in the house. The home becomes a beacon for the neighbors who experience the grace of a strong family striving for love and goodness. We live in such a way our neighbors experience grace without us knowing it.

Our neighborhoods need holy families strong in virtue and kindness who demonstrate that God's grace does indeed work in our lives. I pray families in our parish become holy families growing in love, impacting families around you, touching lives with the honor, fidelity, and good example the Holy Family set for us. You do not have to look over the fence to find some good people — but rather take a deeper look around the home. There are some true treasures in your home, even the one you see in the mirror.

May you be known as the holy family on _____ street, Houston, TX. 770___.

Pace – Bene,

Msgr. Bill

Msgr. William L. Young, III | Pastor