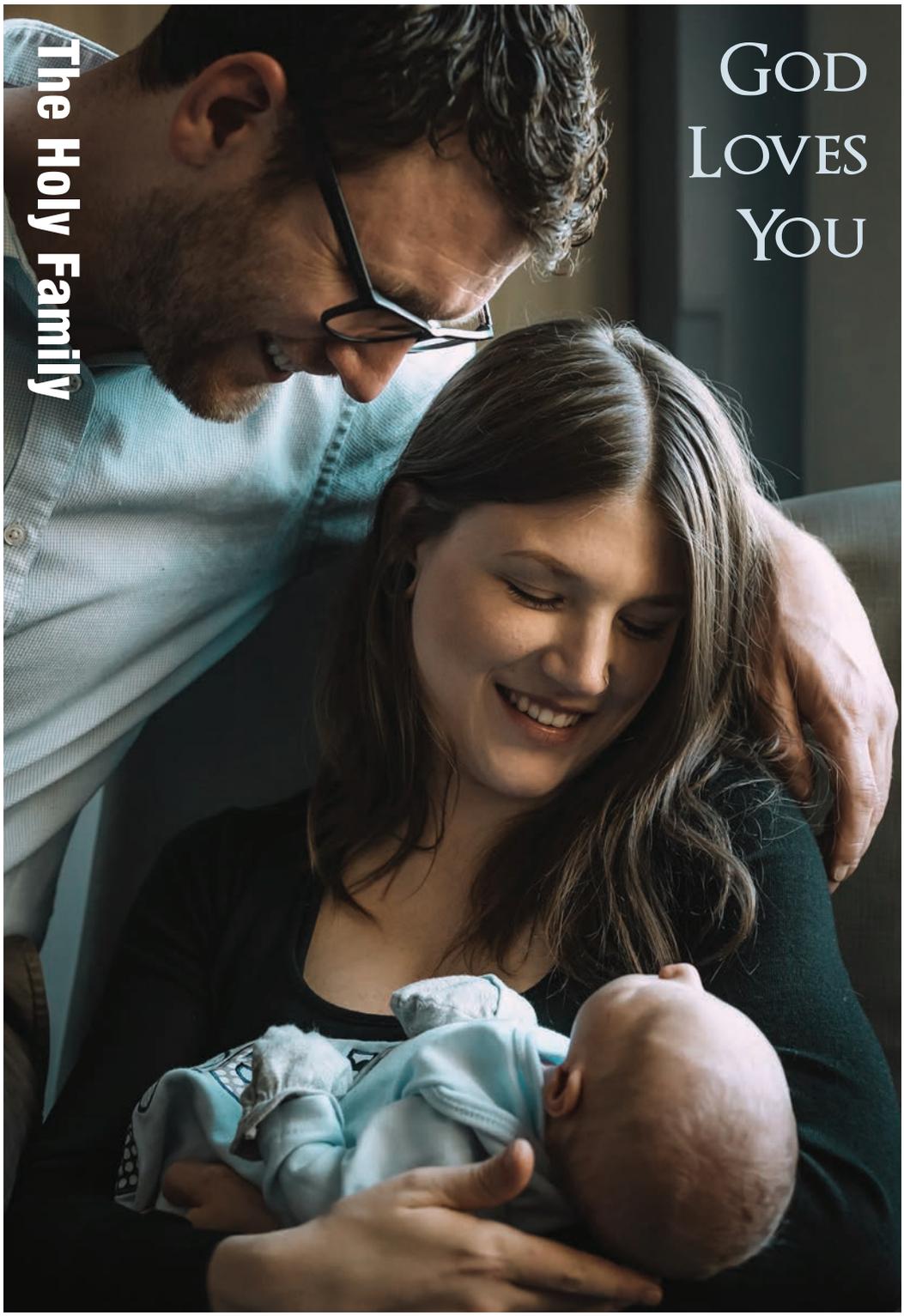


The Holy Family

GOD
LOVES
YOU



FROM THE READINGS

FIRST READING: You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. *Colossians 3:12*

GOSPEL: So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt. *Matthew 2:14*

REFLECTIONS

It is time for re-focusing and going forward, with gratitude, wisdom and the love of family:

May the spirit of unity and love reign amongst us. *Mary MacKillop 1884*

Find happiness in making others happy. *Mary MacKillop 1899*

Be a gift of love and compassion for one another
Do your best and God will bless your efforts. *Mary MacKillop 1889*

The life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises, yet these are also part of its dramatic beauty. Couples should be helped to realise that surmounting a crisis need not weaken their relationship; instead, it can improve, settle and mature the wine of their union. *Pope Francis, The Joy of Love, 232*

The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures. In that variety of gifts and encounters which deepen communion, God has his dwelling place. *Pope Francis, The Joy of Love, 315*

The love of friendship unifies all aspects of marital life and helps family members to grow constantly. This love must be freely and generously expressed in words and acts. In the family ... three words need to be used. I want to repeat this! Three words: 'Please', 'Thankyou', 'Sorry'. Three essential words! *Pope Francis, The Joy of Love, 133*

DISCERNING OUR TRUE NORTH

The beginning of a new year has a way of calling us to reflect on the depth and direction of our inner realities, looking beyond the obvious, searching below the surface. We ask ourselves questions about what is superficial in our lives and what is of lasting value. Are we being seduced by false gods? 'People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success,' wrote monk and mystic Thomas Merton, 'only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.'

A national daily has been inviting readers to write their own obituary as a way of reaching into their most real desires. 'Who and what has meant the most to you?'; 'What life experiences were most transformative for you?'; 'What wisdom would you like to leave behind?' These are soul-sized questions that concern the meaning and purpose of our lives, the discernment of the misty but abiding horizon we call our 'true north'.

Daniel O'Leary, Discerning Our True North



FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- 1. From these readings and reflections,** what words, phrases and insights stand out for you?
- 2. Reflect on the questions shared by Daniel O'Leary:**
 - Is your 'ladder of success' leaning against the right wall?
 - What is superficial about your life and what is of lasting value?
 - Who and what has meant the most to you?
 - What life experiences were most transformative for you?
 - What wisdom would you like to leave behind?
- 3. Express** a hope or intention for the future.

CLOSING PRAYER

A Blessing for Your Family and Your Home

May Jesus, son of Mary,
bless you and your family.

May your home be a place of friendship,
of deepening relationships of love.

May it be a place of safety and mutual care,
of new discoveries, of quiet,
of communication and laughter.

May it be a place where parents and children
find delight in each other's company.

May it be a place of welcome
where relatives, friends and strangers find an open door.
May there be a special and compassionate welcome
for the needy, the homeless and the poor.

May God bless you in your home;
may it be filled with the harmony of music;
may there be joy in the sharing of meals;
may there often be the laughter of children;
may there be mutual support in times of distress
and encouragement in the times of celebration.
May the Healer of Galilee
bestow his blessing on your family and your home. Amen.

Adapted from the prayer of J. Johansen-Berg



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