

## Holy Family 2009c

I. Margot McMahon did a sculpture of the "Holy Family" for the Church of St. Patrick in Lake Forrest, Illinois. It's not your typical statue of the Holy Family-Mary and Joseph gazing down on a smiling infant. It depicts the family a few years later when Jesus is a pre-adolescent-of the sort that St. Luke writes about in today's gospel. Jesus is seated in front of His parents. He appears a bit separated from them. The arms of Joseph reach out to put a reassuring hand on the shoulder of Jesus, but hesitates. It's as if touching his shoulder might trigger a revolt. Mary and Joseph are not looking at their son, but somewhere into the distance as if they were trying to figure out their son, their family and God-but they don't seem to be coming to any conclusion. Finally there is a thoughtful look on Jesus' face as if to say "They don't understand".

II. To be sure the sculpture doesn't match the image we grew up with. After all, what is a "holy family" if not complete 'peace' among the family members? Isn't it supposed to be a complete harmony of everybody, perfectly following God's plan? To which St. Luke might say-"Keep on looking".

III. If you find this all-too- real gospel of Jesus and His parents by St. Luke a little disconcerting, maybe your idea of the perfect family is different than God's. For it does seem that in the realm of family life, the straight lines that God writes, do look crooked to our eyes at times. So much worry, so much

confusion-but as Luke would say "Keep on looking".

IV. If you were to make a sculpture of your family, I bet it would look like the sculpture in St. Patrick's in Lake Forrest. There might be strained looks of disappointment; questioning eyes on more than a few faces. Probably goes that way with all our families. Should we be surprised when our relationships with other families run at different temperatures. Sometimes hot, sometimes cold or lukewarm.

V. Jesus, Mary and Joseph teach us that our disillusionments-be they about God, our family, our church, or ourselves- are turning points, not ending points. Disillusionment is just that-freedom from our illusions. It put us in connection with authentic grace that is realized in the flesh and blood of those around us-warts and all! Searching for the perfect family? We'll have to settle for 'holy'.