My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I hope all of you and your loved ones had a beautiful Christmas filled with joy and peace!

We are still in the Season of Christmas for the next few weeks and the Church wants to, especially today, consider the mystery of the Holy Family. So it is a moment of joy for all of us to gather as the family of God in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

So the Feast of the Holy Family that we celebrate today is a beautiful reminder of God’s great plan of salvation. The fact that his plan is a plan for the human family.

In God’s plan of salvation, every human family has great importance. And as we all know, the Church, the future of the family is a crucial priority for the Church and for our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

In fact, it is so important to him, that, as we all know, he is making a special trip to the United States to attend the World Meeting of Families this September.

And he also has called a Synod of the Bishops that started, in a sense, this past October and is going to have another session in October of 2015. And the theme of the meeting is exactly the same: the family.

And as you also know, for me, the strengthening of marriage and family is one of my priorities in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Because it’s obvious to all of us that there are so many challenges for the families, for families in our society. There are obviously economic challenges, social challenges, and I would say also cultural challenges.

And it seems to me that the only way that we can be able to address those challenges is through strengthening also our faith and our understanding of the role of the family in society. The role of the family as part of God’s plan for beautiful, happy, peaceful — a society that is looking for the common good.
The Pope, Pope Francis, has said: “Jesus was born in a family. He could have come in a spectacular way, or as a warrior, an emperor” — we would say now also as a celebrity, you know, we are in Los Angeles, so we can talk about that, somebody that we was very successful in the movie industry or something like that. That’s from me, not from the Pope.

But the Holy Father said, “… No, no: he is born in a family. … God chose to come into the world in a human family.”

This is, my brothers and sisters, the beautiful truth that we reflecting on today our liturgy. Marriage and the family are at the heart of God’s plan of love.

And when we really think about it, that’s Christmas is all about. Think of the beautiful scenes that we contemplate this past week: of Mary and Joseph and the Child Jesus in the manger. It is a beautiful mystery — that Jesus chose to enter this world through the love of a family. The Holy Family.

So today we especially want to pray for all our families — especially those families that are facing difficulties of any kind. And we want to pray to strengthen families and the institution of marriage in our society.

And the readings of Sacred Scripture from today’s Mass help us with some practical advice for keeping strong marriages and strong families.

In the first reading that we heard today, from the Book of Sirach, we heard that the foundation of the family is the friendship of love.

\[\text{God sets a father in honor over his children}\]
\[\text{The mother’s authority he confirms over her sons}\]

\[\text{ Whoever reveres his father will live a long life}\]
\[\text{He who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother}\]

The friendship of love. It’s so important that husbands and wives be good friends, best friends — among themselves, with each other. But also that they will be good friends with their children. It’s so essential for children never to forget that their best friends are their parents.

And that means that we have to make time for one another. We have to listen to one another. We have to enjoy spending time together. Sometimes in our society, nowadays, it’s so difficult, we all are so busy and we have so many gadgets that they’re a big distraction. Isn’t it true?

So, let’s ask for that grace to really be happy families, where friendship is an essential part of our relationships with one another.
Then says St. Paul, in the second reading of today’s Mass, tell us also something very important for our families. His words are very beautiful.

He says:

*Put on as God’s chosen ones: holy and beloved*

*Heartfelt compassion, kindness, Humility, gentleness, and patience. Bearing with one another and forgiving one another*

Things that are absolutely needed in family life, as we all know. I would say especially that humility and that capacity for forgiving one another.

Because we know that it takes love and grace and patience and hard work to live together as a family. It’s not always easy! It is a journey that you have to make together, as family: parents and children, brothers and sisters, and then we add in our families all our other relatives: uncles and aunts, and grandparents.

So let us ask for that grace, the grace that having God as part of our daily family life. With inspirations of the Holy Spirit, with intercessions of Mary our Blessed Mother.

Maybe that practical advice from Pope Francis can help our families too. Remember, I talk about it all the time, I think it’s very practical. He said that three words are important: *Please. Thank you, and Sorry.*

It’s practical advice and if we do that, it makes a big difference in our lives and in our families, especially when we are capable of saying, “I’m sorry.”

Let’s try to follow that beautiful, simple advice of our Holy Father Pope Francis.

Finally today, in our Gospel reading, we are reminded that parents have a great vocation in the life of their children. The family is where we pass on our values and our traditions and our faith.

As we heard, Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple — *to present him to the Lord.*

It is obviously an ancient custom, to present your firstborn male son in the Temple. So we see this great image of the young mother and father, Mary our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, bringing their child to the Temple and greeted there by the holy couple, Simeon and Anna.

It is a meeting of the generations — old and young. Pope Francis talks a lot about the importance of our grandparents in our lives. For him especially, he has a great memory of his grandmother teaching him the truths of the faith and how to pray.
And that’s what see in today’s passage of the Gospel.

And then finally, we hear how Jesus:

\[
grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;  
and the favor of God was upon him.  
\]

This is, my brothers and sisters, what we want for our children — that they grow up strong and wise and that they go with God and try to do God’s will for their lives.

What a beautiful example, the example of the Holy Family. So let us try to walk with them, and live with them, and learn from their example. Then our families will be, also, holy families. Families where love and friendship and forgiveness and happiness are there every single day.

So, what a beautiful reflection today on the beauty of the family and marriage in our society and in our lives. So I wish that you all continue this Christmas season having blessings and especially that you have a peaceful New Year’s celebration.

Let us entrust our families to the Holy Family. And let us ask Jesus, Mary and Joseph to watch over our families.

And may Mary help us to share the love of God — the beautiful love that comes at Christmas — with everyone in our lives.

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i Readings: Sir. 3:2–6, 12–14; Ps. 128:1–5; Col. 3:12–21; Luke 2:22, 29–30.