

The Joyful Family

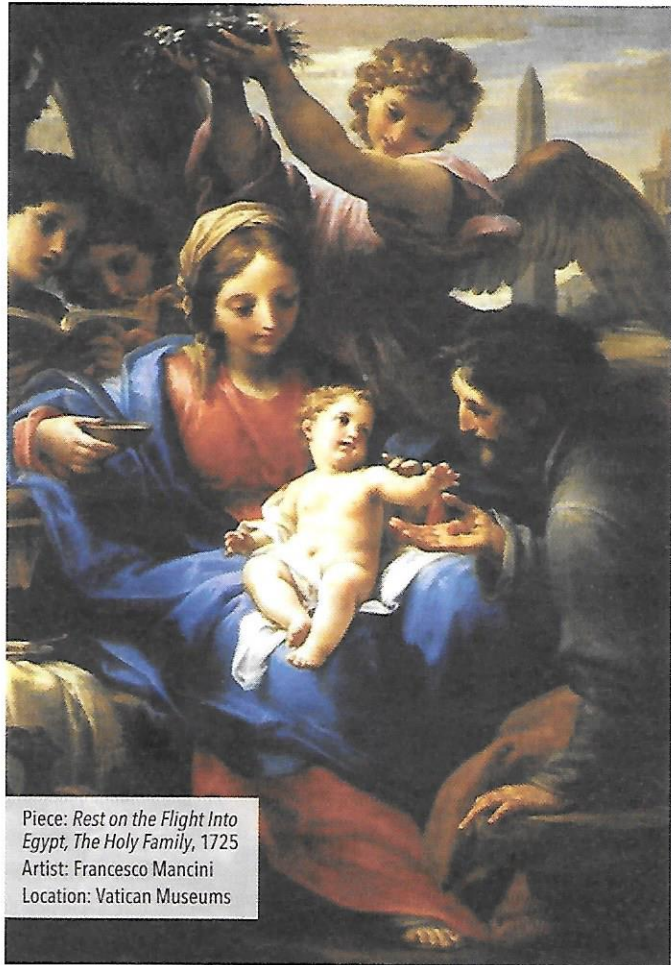
Mancini paints the realistic details that make this scene as ordinary as any family playing with their child in a park. Mary has a bowl of water in her hand, perhaps ready to offer a drink to Jesus after he tastes the strawberry or to clean his stained fingers. A silver bowl of food for the baby rests on a white baby blanket. Perhaps it was just placed there by Joseph, for Jesus has finished his vegetables and now Dad offers dessert! A traveling basket sits in front of a water jug. These instruments show that they are a pilgrim family, and the Egyptian obelisk in the background indicates their destination.

The circumstances are precarious yet joyful, even playful, in their following of God's path. This was just one of the trying times for the Holy Family, which would eventually include losing the Child Jesus in the temple. As their whole focus in this painting is on Jesus, imagine their fear when they can no longer find the heart of their family.

This is a fantastic image of the joys and challenges of family life. There is joy in having Jesus in our midst, and no sacrifice is too great when he is present. But when he is lost from the center, fears and anxieties enter.

The words of Colossians sum up this attitude, making one think that Paul had a good idea of what virtues family life require! Let's work in our families to have Jesus at the center, and once he is there, to "put on" all the virtues that his presence inspires.

—Fr. Mark Haydu, LC



Piece: *Rest on the Flight Into Egypt, The Holy Family*, 1725
Artist: Francesco Mancini
Location: Vatican Museums

For Reflection

Does one of the virtues mentioned by St. Paul catch my attention?

Should I pray for and practice that virtue a little more?

And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

Luke 2:52