

today. The devout Christian Indians and the French Canadian pioneers with their large families, owed much of their spiritual vigor to their devotion towards the Holy Family of Jesus Mary and Joseph.

Come the Christmas season, should you pick up your Pastor's English breviary, look at the Feast of the Holy Family, which falls on the first Sunday after the Epiphany. Pope Leo XIII, in the Sixth Lesson of Matins, explains that this devotion was very popular from the seventeenth century on, in Italy, France, Belgium and later throughout Europe. Then it crossed the wide sea and, by way of Canada, spread throughout America.

But its constant vogue in Canada can be explained only by means of the Confraternity dedicated to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. A few years ago, "Kateri" carried a series of articles on this matter. Even at the risk of being repetitious, in view of the tercentenary, the following notes may not be unwarranted.

In 1663, in Montreal, with the co-operation of Father Gabriel Soudard, P. S. S., of Sister Judith de Brésoles, Superior of the Hotel Dieu, of Blessed Margaret Bourgeois, foundress of the Congregation of Notre Dame, and of Madam Barbara de Boulogne, widow of the third governor of New France, Father Pierre Chaumonot, S. J., founded the Confraternity of the Holy Family.

Bishop de Laval prepared its rules and regulations, instituted a feast of the Holy Family for his immense diocese, which extended from Quebec to the far South, and had quantities of engravings of the Holy Family struck off and honored in all the homes of the land.

As Father Jacques Lewis, S. J., writes in his article on the "Spirituality of French Canada" in the well known *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, the rules of the association, to which was soon added a catechism for the "Imitation of the Holy Family", comprised far more than simple practices of piety. They offered the faithful a complete way of life sufficient to explain the fine moral fiber of the Canadian families that were to follow.

This is easily understood if one takes into account the fact that the Holy Family Confraternity was closely modeled on the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, but on the Soladity as it originally existed and as Pope Pius XII's Encyclical *Bis Saeculari* restored it to us. The expression "Catholic Action" had not then been coined, but the reality was there. No wonder Pope Leo XIII commented: "... Nothing more helpful or effective for Christian families can be imagined than the example of the Holy Family..." And he prescribed that Christian families consecrate themselves to the family of families, that of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.



Pinxit : Daniel Laroau.