

Date: Sun, 30 Dec 2007 09:11:49 PM EST
Subject: For Andrew on December 30, 2007

Dear Andrew,

Today is Holy Family Sunday. On this day we join with millions of other Catholics around the world to honor and to remember Jesus Christ, St. Joseph his earthly father, and the Virgin Mary, his mother. We want to share with you how we think that your father, Trevor Richardson, is following the example of St. Joseph through the divorce/custody crisis in your family.

When Mary told her husband, Joseph, that she was pregnant, he knew he was not the father because they had not lived together. Because Joseph was a righteous man and a devout observer of the Mosaic Law he decided to quietly divorce her. But then an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him 'Jesus', because he will save his people from their sins." Joseph did the right thing and became the earthly father of Jesus by taking Mary into his home and naming her son Jesus. (Matthew 1:19-23)

When your mother told your father that she was pregnant with you in August of 2005, they had just reconciled after four months living apart because they were going through a divorce. Your father once had his doubts that you were his son, but that question was later resolved. You are in fact his son, so he did the right thing and stood by your mother. He helped her find a doctor and a hospital in Milwaukee, and arranged for insurance coverage. They took childbirth education classes together so they could share the experience of your birth. Your father took Spanish language lessons because he wanted to help you to know and to appreciate your mother's native language and culture. He also wanted you connected to your Richardson-Kerkes family roots so he decided to name you 'Andrew' because that is his middle name and the name of his Great-uncle Andrew Kerkes and his Great-grandfather Andrew Kerkes.

Before Jesus was born his parents had to travel from their home in the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea --- a distance of about seventy-five miles. Joseph walked and Mary rode on a donkey. They had to go because Caesar Augustus (the Roman ruler of Galilee and Judea at the time) ordered a census of all people that he ruled over. All families had to go to the town of the father's house and family to be counted. Joseph was of the house and family of King David, so he had to be counted with his wife, Mary, in Bethlehem, which is the City of King David. While they were in Bethlehem "the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:1-8)

About a month before you were born, your mother suddenly decided to leave your father and their home in Milwaukee and go to be with her mother in Queretaro, Mexico. Your father tried to persuade her to stay with him in Milwaukee. He was very sad when she left and unhappy that he could not be there when you were born. After you were born, your mother called your father asking him to come to Mexico to bring you and her back to live in Milwaukee. He couldn't do that at the time because he had to work and earn money to support his family, which now included you. Finally, in June 2006 he was able to travel to Queretaro and bring you and your mother back to live in Milwaukee. Again, he did the right thing. He did what he had to do. He did his best.

After the visit of the Magi, who were seeking "the newborn king of the Jews", an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to immediately leave Bethlehem and not to return to Nazareth but instead go to Egypt. This was because the current king of the Jews, Herod, wanted Jesus killed so he couldn't someday replace Herod as King of the Jews. Joseph did the right thing. He took Mary and the baby Jesus to live in Egypt. After Herod died, an angel told Joseph in a dream that it was now safe for him to take Mary and Jesus back to Nazareth. So when Jesus was between two and three years old his father again did the right thing and took him and his mother back to Nazareth, where he was raised and educated. (Matthew 2:1-23)

Your mother and father are again divorcing. They cannot live together anymore, but they still are your parents and love you. The right thing for them to do is share in the raising and educating of you, as Joseph and Mary did for Jesus. Unfortunately your mother isn't doing the right thing. In August of this year (2007) she secretly fled and illegally took you with her to her mother's home in Mexico. She has told many lies about your father to the Mexican officials in order to keep you away from your father. We all hope and pray that your mother will have a change of heart and do the right thing. We know that your father will continue to follow the example of St. Joseph and do the right thing as he continues to work to get you back.

Love and prayers,
Grandpa and Grandma Richardson

P.S. Of course, we know that it will be years before you can read and understand this email. The important thing is that whatever happens in the future you will be able one day to learn about how much your father loves you and wants to be with you.