



THE HOLY FAMILY



He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man. - Lk 2:51-52

Just Like a Normal Family

This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28 · Samuel's birth
- ▶ 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24 · We are children of God
- ▶ Luke 2:41-52 · The boy Jesus in the Temple

With the story of Jesus' birth still fresh in our minds on this first Sunday after Christmas, the church uses the opportunity to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family with all of the readings focused on families. It is fitting that the Gospel reading gives us a glimpse into the less-than-perfect nuclear family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. It offers a good reminder that even though they are holy, that doesn't mean their family life was idyllic all the time.

As Catholics, we believe that Mary was conceived without sin (the Immaculate Conception) and that Jesus was sinless. Joseph was a regular guy like the rest of us. Still, living in a family is hard at times, whether your family is 2/3 sinless or not. When people live in close quarters, and there is stress about food, housing, travel, childcare, and extended family ("who was supposed to be watching Jesus, anyway?"), it's normal for frustration and impatience to flare. Factor in a budding teenager who is pushing for greater independence and parents who don't fully understand their son and you have a story like we hear today.

Mary and Joseph's feelings of anxiety and guilt at the end of their journey—and their frustration with Jesus after they found him—weren't sinful. Neither was Jesus' exasperated response, which he very



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"We are God's children now;
... we shall be like him."

Sheepish Question:
Recognizing my own shortcomings, how can I strengthen--and be strengthened by--God's holy family?

well may have delivered with an eye-roll: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" After all, Jesus was fully human, and he had to go through the same process of growing up as any child does. He wasn't born knowing how to walk or talk. His parents had to teach him his manners and ask him to help with chores. Just like he would have experienced the "terrible twos," he had to go through puberty with all its complexities and identity conflicts. It's no wonder, then, that at the end of a long family trip with a 12-year-old, the "holy family" had a "regular family" moment.

Questions of the Week

- 1 What stands out for you most in this Gospel passage? Why?
- 2 As Christians, we believe that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. Does this story of the 12-year-old Jesus emphasize his humanity or divinity more for you? Which do you tend to relate to more when you think of him and pray to him?

MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday, December 25th—The Nativity of the Lord

8:30 a.m. St. Leo's—Susan Kenyan / Jeannie Crouse

10 a.m. St. Joseph's—Parishioners

Sunday, December 26th—The Holy Family

8 a.m. St. Leo's—Matthew Muldowney

9 a.m. St. Joseph's—Cecelia Davidson/Paige Family

9:30 a.m. Immaculate Conception—Jyl Way/Anne Valentine; Matthew Gaglia/Jack & Jane Smyth

10:30 a.m. St. Patrick's—Catherine Denn McAuliffe/The McAuliffe Family

Monday, December 27th—St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

8:30 a.m. St. Leo's—

Tuesday, December 28th—The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

8:30 a.m. St. Leo's—

Wednesday, December 29th—St. Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr

8:30 a.m. St. Leo's—

Thursday, December 30th—Sixth Day Within the Octave of The Nativity of The Lord

8:30 a.m. St. Leo's—

Friday, December 31st—St. Sylvester I, Pope; New Year's Eve

4:30 p.m. St. Leo's—

Saturday, January 1st—New Year's Day; Mary, The Holy Mother of God; World Day of Peace

10 a.m. Immaculate Conception—Parishioners

Sunday, January 2nd—The Epiphany of the Lord; Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church

8 a.m. St. Leo's—

9 a.m. St. Joseph's—Patricia Elenz/Martha Scofield

9:30 a.m. Immaculate Conception—Bill Clark/Family; Susan Winchell/Jack & Jane Smyth; Rev. Paul Carey/Pat and Tom Rouse

10:30 a.m. St. Patrick's—Daniel Bronchetti/Doreen Bronchetti

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Families can be very difficult things to negotiate. This is true not only of our families of origin, the current family of which we are a part, the family of our Church, our society, and our global family as well. Everything human can be found in family stories. Those stories speak of wonderful life-giving successes as well as painful spirit-robbing abuses. Our greatest joys and our greatest wounds are usually connected with the experience of family. Our needs, experiences, and unresolved baggage often color what we bring to our familiar relationships. They contribute to our level of defensiveness, how guarded and protected we become, and what prejudices we believe.

In order to break the cycle of dysfunction we have to remember that it is not only by human effort that we negotiate the difficult and challenging events of our lives. There is a Divine Effort at work as well. For sure, the human effort can create quite a mess and easily destroy lives. This is true of any family with which we are associated. Today's Feast of the Holy Family serves to help us understand that there is a Divine Story being told as well. It is a story of perseverance in the face of hardship, determination in the face of despair, healing when we see nothing but wounds, and light where there is darkness.

Do we believe that God is always working, guiding, restoring, and leading? Unless we do, we will never be free from the imperfections and wounds that bind us and never be able to understand what it really means to forgive. Pope Francis tells us that the "light which comes from the Holy Family encourages us to offer human warmth to other families." While this is most certainly true, we can only really begin to do this when we realize that we are still works in progress, not anchored to the wounds and sins of our past, and still a leading star in God's continually unfolding story of love. The Holy Family persevered and radiated warmth because they knew they were not alone. We can too.

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New Year's Mass Schedule

New Year's Eve:

4:30 p.m. St. Leo's

New Year's Day:

10 a.m. Immaculate Conception

Thank you to everyone who made our Christmas liturgies so beautiful!!

Miscellaneous Announcement

FOOD SENSE - Food Sense order forms are out, pick one up and drop off your order by Saturday January 8 at St Leo's Church Hall between 10:00-2:00 pm. Pick up food orders at the Church Hall on Thu January 20 between 3:00-5:00 pm. Any questions, please call Jeannie at (315) 696-5092. Thank you!

EVERYDAY STEWARDSHIP - RECOGNIZE GOD IN YOUR ORDINARY MOMENTS

All in the Family

At first glance, we can often find the image of the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and the Christ Child intimidating — who are we to aspire to that level of discipleship? How could we ever hope to conform ourselves to that mold? Sometimes, it can even be painful — perhaps we hail from a broken family or struggle with a broken relationship within our family, or perhaps we long to be a mother or a father ourselves and that state in life has eluded us.

But the image of the Holy Family is, in reality, a beautiful invitation to us all, no matter our vocation or our state in life, and the example of Mary, Joseph and Jesus is rich with the symbolism of stewardship.

You need not be a biological mother who has carried a child in her womb to be a mother in spirit. Who in your world needs you to love them with the heart of a mother?

The same goes for fatherhood. The Church and the world are crying out for the courageous witness of Christian men like St. Joseph. Who can you love with the steadfast, selfless protection of a father?

Who in your life needs you to love them with the faithful, unconditional love of a son? Who needs your gentle and constant love as a daughter?

We are the Body of Christ, friends. Those of us rejoicing in heaven, those of us suffering in purgatory, and those of us struggling here on earth. We are the great family. Let us love each other well.

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

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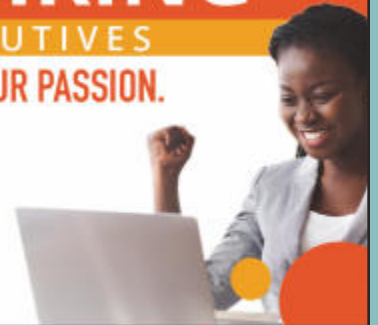
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