

# Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

## Sunday in the Octave of Christmas

Sir 3:2-7, 12-14

Col 3:12-21

Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

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### The Holy Family - God's Gifts to Us

Christmas is a time for families to be together. We have our Christmas dinner together; exchange gifts; we come here to church to celebrate the Eucharist; we visit our friends and relatives – the list is endless. We thank God for our families; they are God's gifts to us.

In our world today however, there are many families who are separated from each other. In war-torn countries, many family members are separated by force, kidnapped and even killed. Here in our society, there are many families who don't love each other. There are husbands who cheat on their wives and vice-versa; parents whose divorce hurt their children; children who kill their parents; children who place their aging parents in nursing homes but rarely visit nor call them; parents who physically (and even sexually) abuse their kids.

We read learn about these stories in the media and hear about it from other people. Many families do not make the effort to communicate and talk to each other, to support one another and they therefore give up so easily on loving each other. A few disagreements between a husband and wife, for example, can easily lead to a divorce, which, if the couple has kids, affects them for life. There can be a lack of patience and compassion in our families.

In today's Gospel according to St. Matthew, we hear of one family who practiced patience, obedience, love and faith in God. This is the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, whose feast we celebrate today. The Holy Family is a model for us and we cannot compare ourselves to them. Look at its members: Joseph "the upright man," Mary the virgin mother and Jesus, the only Son of God. They had ideal relationships with God and with each other.

But like us they were also very human and had their share of life's difficulties. They were poor, powerless and homeless. A decree by the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus forced them to leave for Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth to her son Jesus and laid him in a stable of animals. King Herod's cruelty forced them to seek refuge in Egypt. But through all these trials, they placed themselves in the hands of God. Joseph and Mary were living with God, the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, the Son of God, was truly human; born of a woman. He grew in age and wisdom in a family. He experienced all human conditions, including being at the mercy of the rulers of the world, together with his parents, and living

a life with many dangers. Yet despite all this, Jesus was obedient to his Father's will, even unto death and he therefore accomplished the work of salvation. God came to us through Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, and through Jesus, we can be saved. Through his life, Jesus shows us the way to God. Jesus Christ is God's gift to us.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph are good examples for us to follow in our family lives. We can learn from them. In addition, today's readings show us how to love one another as family members. To you fathers, St. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians (the second reading) says, "*Love your wives; do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged.*" To you mothers, Paul says to "*love your husbands.*" To you children Paul says, "*Obey, love and respect your parents.*" In the first reading, Sirach says, "*If you show reverence to your father, you will live a long life. And if you comfort your mother, you obey God.*" To the whole family, Paul says, "*Put on patience, kindness and compassion. Forgive each other.*" These are the ways in which the Holy Family lived.

Love, forgiveness, kindness, patience and other virtues begin at home, in our families. The practice of loving each other in our families trains us to love God, our neighbors and other families. We bring that love from our families to love and serve a larger family, the Body of Christ, the Church – all of us. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ and we are called to love one another, as God loves us.

Let us ask God, as we continue this Christmas Eucharist, to help us live like the Holy Family, united in love and respect. Let us ask for Mary and Joseph's prayers that God will unite our families in peace and love. And let us thank God for the gifts of Christ Jesus, Mary and Joseph, our families and our church.