

# Read

1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

Psalm 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10

1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

Luke 2:41-52

## LIVING THE WORD

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

December 30, 2018



## REFLECTION

It may come as a surprise to us when we hear Jesus' response to Mary after she had been looking for him anxiously in the Temple. Jesus acts as if it were perfectly natural for him to stay in the Temple for three days instead of going home with his parents. He even seems a little brusque with Mary! What would our parents think if we disappeared for three days and when they found us, we said to them, "Why were you looking for me" (Luke 2:49)? As with every aspect of Jesus' life, there is a deeper meaning behind his attitude and answers. To Jesus, God's desires were higher than the desires of his earthly family. Though this may seem cruel, it really is the proper order of love. Jesus, as second person of the Trinity, was so united to God, that, in his human life, he followed God's will implicitly and wholeheartedly, while secondarily following his earthly parents. In order to properly love our earthly family, we need to love God even more. God is the source of our lives of discipleship; loving our family and others naturally flows from our love of God. Loving our family may mean standing up for what we know is right if our family wants us to do something immoral, or it may mean acting kind when they say hurtful things to us. Sometimes loving our family in God's way can feel like the hardest task God could set before us. After all, they know how to push all our buttons, because they are the ones who installed

them! By looking to God the Father and asking him to help us, we can understand how to truly love our family on earth.

## ACTION

Think about something a family member does that really annoys you. The next time you feel annoyed, take a deep breath, and, instead of acting out of annoyance, respond in the way God's love requires. It could be an affirmative reaction, such as reacting to their harsh words with loving words, or it could be a lack of reaction, such as not entering into gossip with them but kindly changing the subject. This will be really difficult at first, but it will get easier over time and your response is guaranteed to surprise your family member! They will likely admire you for standing up for the good, even if they don't acknowledge it at first.

Check out this article:



*"Ways Jesus Dealt with  
Difficult People"*

by Sr. Theresa Aletheia Noble  
[aleteia.org/2016/02/02/5-ways-jesus-dealt-with-difficult-people/](http://aleteia.org/2016/02/02/5-ways-jesus-dealt-with-difficult-people/)

## ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What are some ways that you can show God's love to your family?
- ❖ What does being a child of God mean to you?



December 30, 2018

## FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

### LECTIONARY #17C

1 Samuel 1:20–22, 24–28

Psalm 84:2–3, 5–6, 9–10

1 John 3:1–2, 21–24

Luke 2:41–52

### Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

Today's Gospel presents the story of Jesus in the Temple. Jesus became separated from his family for a few days. When they went looking for him, Mary and Joseph discovered him in the Temple. They were so puzzled by his behavior! Even though they knew their son was special, they did not know what his actions meant or where his actions would lead. God often reveals himself a little at a time. The experience Mary and Joseph had in the Temple was God's way of revealing himself and his purpose a little bit more.

As you listen and experience the Word of God today, notice the focus is on the blessings and gifts that come from God. These blessings and gifts are freely given by God because he loves us. There is nothing that we can do that justifies these gifts—God's love is enough. Guiding, helping, or leading us in our efforts, he is always present to us. However, this presence is sometimes revealed to us in tiny ways, in small bits, and through our various experiences in life. In the Gospel, Joseph and Mary didn't have a full understanding of what was to become of their son. Likewise, we don't often have the full picture of our life's purpose or where God fits into our life. But we have to move forward on the journey and trust in the guidance and support of our loving God.

This Sunday's Mass is the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Teachers, catechists, and youth ministers should be aware and acknowledge that your teens may not come from a "perfect" family or from a family that resembles the Scripture reading's depiction of the Holy Family. When discussing today's feast with teens, focus on the themes of blessings, gifts, God's presence, and God's revelation of himself in Jesus. That is something your teens may be able to relate to.

**Q FOCUS:** *God's love is freely given.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Since this Feast of the Holy Family falls on the Sunday following Christmas, only one day divides this feast and the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. This is a rich time during our liturgical year, and these feasts offer something rather contrary to what is happening in the secular world. Note that while the world is "wrapping up" the Christmas celebrations and moving on to the New Year's festivities, the Catholic community is pondering the Holy Family and the role of Mary in salvation. Invite students to comment on the contrast.

### Church Teaching Connection

This prayer from Pope Francis is quite fitting to offer on the Feast of the Holy Family for it reflects the faith and trust that Mary held for her child, as the Light of the World:

*Mother, help our faith!*

*Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize his voice and call.*

*Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise.*

*Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith.*

*Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and  
to believe in his love,  
especially at times of trial,  
beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith  
is called to mature.*

*Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One.  
Remind us that those who believe are never alone.  
Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus,  
that he may be light for our path.  
And may this light of faith always increase in us,  
until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ  
himself, your Son, our Lord!*

*Amen.*

—Taken from the encyclical letter *Lumen fidei*,  
given in Rome, at St. Peter's Basilica on 29 June,  
the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul,  
in 2013, the first year of Pope Francis' pontificate.

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel

Luke 2:41-52

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in

the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. 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.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection (this reflection includes references to the other readings; since only the Gospel was proclaimed at this session you may need to recap the other readings for teens):*

The readings this week are filled with messages of gifts and blessings. I remember learning that in the Jewish faith, blessing has more to do with awareness of God in all things. When we bless something, we are acknowledging the good in it or the good that comes from it. In the First Reading, we learn that Hannah has conceived a child and that after his birth she dedicates him to God. He is a blessing. This passage reminds us that nothing we do is done through our efforts alone. God works with us and through us. All gifts come from God. If we are mindful of that reality, we will be more aware of God's presence in our lives and allow him to lead us to do great things. The path may not be easy, but God will light the way and show us where to go. If we shift our focus to our own accomplishments and reduce the importance of God in our

lives, we can become prideful and arrogant, enabling ego to get in the way. (Note for teachers, catechists, and youth ministers: EGO was recently defined as “Edging God Out.” You might consider a discussion sparkler by asking teens, “What does it mean to edge God out? To place yourself in the center of things rather than allowing God to be the center of your life?”)

► Have you ever been arrogant, prideful, or selfish?

► Do you feel like there are other things in your life that are more important than God?

All of these experiences are normal, especially for teenagers; it’s part of your natural development! However, a good rule of thumb is to not make any decisions without first consulting God in prayer. “Pause and pray” is a great mantra for us.

The letter from St. John reminds us that we are God’s children and that God is always with us. Knowing this, we can be confident in God and trust that he will always provide us with what we need. The tricky thing is figuring out what are our true needs. Sometimes, what we think we need isn’t what God intends for us. This can make us feel as though God isn’t listening or that God doesn’t care. (Example: losing a game when you prayed you would win.)

► Have you ever felt like that? Share if you are comfortable.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were on a pilgrimage. It was not uncommon for children to spend time with other families as they traveled in the caravan, but the expected outcome was to be reunited upon arriving at their destination. This time, that didn’t happen. Joseph and Mary were unable to find Jesus. Imagine the worry! They panicked! Again, Mary knew that her son was special and that God had great plans for him, but she had no idea what that involved. They found Jesus in the Temple proclaiming the Scriptures. Mary approached Jesus and told him how worried she and Joseph had been! Jesus (who was only twelve years old!) questioned their feelings. Of course they should have known he would have been “in my Father’s house” (Luke 2:49). This was a clue, another piece of the puzzle for Mary and Joseph of what was to come. They didn’t have the whole picture, but they trusted that God would lead them

and reveal his plan piece by piece. But Mary and Joseph trusted in God’s plan. Mary kept that experience “in her heart” (Luke 2:51). How difficult that must have been!

► Have you ever had to wait for something and learn about it little by little?

► Was that difficult for you?

► Whom did you have to trust in that process?

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on pages 106–107.

**All gifts come from God; he makes all things possible.**

**Blessings are of God and through these blessings he gives us all we need.**

**God reveals himself to us little by little. We need to hold each experience in trust and believe that God will lead us where we need to be.**

## Act on the Word

### What Would the Holy Family Do? What Will Your Family Do?

Create brief scenarios that everyday families face. Divide the youth into teams. Read a scenario to one team. Give them two minutes to create a solution/approach to the situation as a holy family would. Following the team’s response to the scenario, allow the other team to add ideas or to (in love and charity) creatively determine a different resolution to the situation presented.

### Closing Prayer

Close with the prayer found on pages 106–107.

### For the Holyday of Obligation

To help teens prepare for Mary, the Holy Mother of God, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Inform teens of the holyday Mass times and encourage them to attend Mass with family or friends.