

Read

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Colossians 3:12-21 or
3:12-17

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23



REFLECTION

A priest friend told me about a recent wedding he attended where the couple honored the Holy Family with flowers. While guests gathered, my friend overheard someone ask, “What’s the Holy Family? Does the church designate a family they think is especially holy and they get to be the Holy Family for a while?”

It can be easy to miss something really important about the incarnation: *Jesus was born into a family!*

The Holy Family doesn’t fit the mold of what most people (in Jesus’ time and ours) would consider especially holy: Mary was pregnant before marriage, and not by her fiancé. They’re poor, and they’re fleeing to Egypt as refugees. Jesus is an only child in a culture that valued having many children (even today, some people joke about “big” families being the most “Catholic,” which is untrue and hurtful to families with one child or no children).

What makes the Holy Family holy isn’t how well they fit the so-called ideal. Rather, it is their manner of life that gives rise to the description “holy.” As individuals and as a family unity, they follow God’s will. They always choose to honor one other and the Lord. They embody the love of God and neighbor.

❓ QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Do I judge my family by society’s definition of holiness, or by the standard of the Holy Family?
- ❖ How can my small, daily choices lead me to a life of holiness?



ACTION

Think about your own family, just as it is (big or small, living in one household or multiple, whether or not you share genes, or even the same faith). Do you consider your family holy, as modeled by the Holy Family? Does your family love God and your neighbors—especially your closest neighbors: one another? What can you do this week to bring more love of God and neighbor into your family?



Do an image search for the sculpture “A Quiet Moment” by Timothy P. Schmalz. Reflect on this image throughout the week.



December 28, 2025

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

LECTIONARY #17A

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

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

The Gospel reading today seems out of place with the typical idyllic Christmas story of the baby in the manger. The Holy Family is forced to flee the murderous intentions of King Herod and go to Egypt. The story becomes even more distressing when we see that the verses that were omitted from today's reading (Mt 2:16-18) describe the action Herod took against this unknown newborn king (Jesus)—he had all the boys in Bethlehem, ages two and under, killed. Because of Joseph's trust in and obedience to God's word communicated to him yet again in a dream, the Holy Family was already in Egypt at this time. The Holy Family endured many trials in a short period of time and the young people are invited to explore the way Mary and Joseph can act as a model for their own family situations.

Q FOCUS: *The Holy Family trusted God, even in difficult circumstances.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

While today's feast honoring the Holy Family is an important feast in and of itself and is usually celebrated the Sunday after Christmas, when December 28 does not fall on a Sunday, we remember the Holy Innocents. The Holy Innocents are directly related to today's Gospel passage. The Holy Family flees to Egypt because they were warned by God that Herod,

because he wanted to protect his power, was trying to find and kill Jesus. Not included in today's reading is what Herod did when he realized the Magi weren't going to report back about Jesus' whereabouts: he decreed that all males in Bethlehem, ages two years and younger, were to be killed. These innocent children that lost their lives are referred to as the Holy Innocents.

Church Teaching Connection

"Every family should look to the icon of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Its daily life had its share of burdens and even nightmares, as when they met with Herod's implacable violence. This last was an experience that, sad to say, continues to afflict the many refugee families who in our day feel rejected and helpless. Like the Magi, our families are invited to contemplate the Child and his Mother, to bow down and worship him (cf. Mt 2:11). Like Mary, they are asked to face their family's challenges with courage and serenity, in good times and bad, and to keep in their heart the great things which God has done (cf. Lk 2:19, 51)" (*Amoris laetitia*, 30).

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

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, *Out of Egypt I called my son.*

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, *He shall be called a Nazorean.*

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:

Today's reading makes us realize that Joseph and Mary went through a lot in the first few months and years of their marriage. They both had encounters with an angel of God. Mary gave birth to the Son of God in less-than-ideal conditions. And now, in today's reading, we hear how Joseph was called by God to protect his family from a murderous tyrant king. The Holy Family became refugees, fleeing to Egypt to avoid persecution and staying away from their home and family until Herod had died.

Not every family has to go through such monumental events in their lives, but most families do

experience some types of stress and trial. Through all the unexpected stressors and trials, Mary and Joseph remained faithful to God. Joseph's immediate response to God's directions in today's Gospel show how he continued to trust God. Through this trusting obedience, he was able to protect his family with God's help.

► What are some ways that families can remain close to God and each other in times of struggle?

► How can you show your love and support to friends who might be dealing with family issues?

Even though Mary and Joseph were guided by God in these situations, they still had to make the choice to listen and obey. They would have had to work together to accomplish what God had set out for them and would have needed to trust one another in these difficult times. When challenges arise in families, it sometimes happens that some family members will become overwhelmed by the situation and lash out at others. Emotions run high and tensions snap. When we shift our focus away from God and his love, we are more susceptible to treating others, even those we love, poorly. But, looking at the model of the Holy Family, we see that, before any action on their part, they listened and trusted God. Only then did they act. This is a good model for us to follow.

► What are some values that families should work to develop, especially in times of peace and calm, that could help them get through the more difficult times?

► How can your family show support for other families, especially refugees, during Christmas Time?

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 page 102.

Mary and Joseph had to trust God and one another.

All families face some type of struggle, but God is with them in all situations.

The Holy Family is a model for our families.

Act on the Word

Trust Maze

For this activity, you will need to prepare a maze in your gathering space using tape that will not damage the floor and is easy to remove (see the activity for more details).

You will also need bandanas or scarves to use as blindfolds during the activity.

Before the activity begins, or with the help of the young people, create a maze on the floor of your gathering space using easily removable tape. The maze should be wide enough for a person to walk along its path and should involve some tricky turns. However, keep in mind that the person completing the maze will be blindfolded so it doesn't have to be too complicated for it to be effective.

When you are ready to begin the activity, share with the teens that when God asked Joseph to go to Egypt in order to protect his family, Joseph trusted God and obeyed him. Remind them that over the past several weeks of Advent and Christmas Time, we have heard readings that illustrate Mary's and Joseph's trust in God. They did not know God's entire plan. They trusted God to give them what they needed at the time and to direct them on the path that would lead them to a deeper relationship with him. Explain that today's activity will be an exercise in trust with one another.

Divide the teens into pairs or let them choose their own partners. The partners will take turns guiding one other through the maze. Once everyone is ready to begin, have one pair go first. One person will be blindfolded and must walk within the path, but the other person (not blindfolded) who is acting as the guide can be outside of the path. The guide

will give directions to the blindfolded partner and should walk closely next to or behind that person, giving them instructions of where to turn, when to go left or right, when to take big or small steps, and so on.

When the pair is about midway through the maze, the next pair of teens can begin. Once a pair has finished the maze, the teens will return to the beginning of the maze, switch roles, and complete the maze again.

After everyone has had a turn to go through the maze in both roles, ask them to share how it felt to be blindfolded and to trust their partner's direction. How does this relate to how Mary and Joseph trusted God? How does it relate to how the young people trust God?

Closing Prayer

*God beyond all boundaries,
we know that you traverse time, space,
and borders.*

*As you appeared to Joseph in dreams,
showing him your will,
so too show us your will for us,
for our Church, and for our world.*

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for the Solemnity of 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. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.