

# 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

## LIVING THE WORD

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

December 29, 2019



## REFLECTION

When we think about the Holy Family it is easy to imagine a peaceful, family portrait where a smiling Mary, Joseph, and Jesus sit together. Today's Gospel, however, reminds us that although holy indeed, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus experienced challenges in their life together. Fear of death forced the Holy Family to flee to Egypt from Israel. With this, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were refugees seeking safety and security at a time when Herod wanted to destroy the Christ child.

Two thousand years later, families around the world still flee their homelands to escape violence, poverty, and death. These immigrants and refugees are the modern day image of the Holy Family, risking all in hopes of safety and security. Do we think of the Holy Family when we see images of children fleeing persecution in the Middle East? Do we recall the journey of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus when we hear stories about people traveling to the United States from Central and South America? Are we willing to see the Holy Family in our brothers and sisters who are victims of racism and violence? Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were aliens and outcast in their flight to Egypt. We must be willing to encounter and welcome the holy families we meet today.



## ACTION

Write a letter to your local government official expressing your concern for people who are poor, oppressed, and marginalized in any way. Encourage your elected officials to care for the most vulnerable people in our cities and world, recognizing that Mary, Joseph, and Jesus experienced similar pain. Be sure to convey the similarities between the Holy Family and those who seek food, shelter, and peace in our lives today.



[www.house.gov  
/representatives/find-your  
-representative](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative)

## ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How would you describe the Holy Family to someone who has never heard of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus?
- ❖ How does the image of the Holy Family in today's Gospel challenge you to grow as sister, brother, son, or daughter?



December 29, 2019

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

## LECTIONARY #17ABC

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

## 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

In grave danger, the Holy Family is made safe by God's intervention. Out of love for God and his family, Joseph obeys God and does what God asks him to do to keep Mary and Jesus safe from harm. Joseph's faithfulness to God is an example to us of how obedience to God is the loving response to our loving God.

**Q FOCUS:** *God's people are called to obey him out of love.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Note the length of time left in the season, and point out that today is a special feast. Mention the Feast of the Holy Innocents that was observed this past Saturday, and refresh the students' minds if they are unfamiliar with these martyrs, making sure to relate it to today's readings.

### Church Teaching Connection

"One's neighbor is then not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. One's neighbor must therefore be loved, even if an enemy . . ." (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 40).

## 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:*

Joseph, husband of Mary, heard from God in three dreams. First, he learns that he should take Mary as his wife, and not quietly put her aside due to her pregnancy. In today's readings Joseph hears that he should take Mary and Jesus and depart for Egypt. In this act, Joseph protects baby Jesus from being killed by Herod's men, who had been instructed to kill all the baby boys they found living in the region. Safe, the Holy Family resided in faraway Egypt until Joseph hears God's instruction to take the family home, as their homeland is safe upon Herod's death.

In all of these instances, we learn about Joseph's devoted and unwavering obedience to God. What we witness in Joseph is selflessness, love, devotion, and a commitment to being obedient to God. Joseph was specially chosen by God to be an earthly father to Jesus; God knew the man for this job would need a spirit of deep love—his love of his wife and the child Jesus would have to surpass his own self-interest. When Joseph listened to God in his dream, Joseph said goodbye to his homeland, his culture and everything familiar in order to protect Mary and Jesus, not knowing when the little family could return to their families and their land. He did this out of love and trust in God, and out of

love for his family. Joseph knew that by obeying God, he would be able to love and protect his family. Obedience to God was at the forefront of Joseph's life.

Obedience to God is a hallmark of the Christian life. We are all called to obey God, and to live selflessly in loving obedience to him. Although there is scriptural precedence for God communicating with faithful people in dreams, the vast majority of God's followers will never receive such communication. We rely on Scripture and Tradition, and those things form a person's conscience. Our consciences tell us what is right and wrong, what is wise and what is foolish. Nobody is ever perfect in their endeavors to obey God, but we are called to always work toward obedience.

► How are you called to this obedience at home, at work or at school?

► What does it mean for us to obey God?

Certainly doing what we are supposed to do is important—for example, the Ten Commandments tell us not to steal or lie. In the New Testament, Jesus gives us a new commandment; that we must love God with all our being and love our neighbors as ourselves (see Luke 10:27). When we obey Jesus in this commandment, it is not a simple checkmark on a list. Indeed, obedience to God is an entire orientation of oneself toward God, so that we might have the strength and endurance to live the way he has called us to live. When we obey God, we can respond to his call out of love for him and for our family, friends, neighbors, and strangers. In this way we can be like Joseph and obey God, trusting that God's way is the right and good we can choose in life.

► In what ways do you choose God?

## 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.*

**How can we choose to be like Joseph in obedience to God? What does this obedience look like at home? At school? While participating in extracurricular activities?**

What is virtue, and how do we develop virtues in our lives? How do your friends and family live out virtues in a way that you admire?

There are times in life when we do not wish to act in a virtuous manner. What do you do with those thoughts and feelings? How do you choose what is right and good in such situations?

## Act on the Word

### Imitating the Saints

Prepare a list of the virtues. Ask students to discuss the meanings of these virtues, and ask them to identify saints, biblical people, and living people they see living out specific virtues. Ask the students what they think about the people being discussed, and discuss how such virtuous people can inspire students in their own lives. How does virtuous behavior look in the students' everyday lives?

### The Seven Christian Virtues

- ✧ Chastity
- ✧ Temperance
- ✧ Charity
- ✧ Diligence
- ✧ Patience
- ✧ Humility

## Virtue in Action

This "Act on the Word" consists of two challenges. First, take time to discuss a loving action a person can do for someone in his or her family or someone at school. This act should be grounded in some virtue, not just a nice gesture. Quietly, students can choose this virtuous act. And second, think of someone in your life who you see showing virtue. Let this person know how his or her virtuous behavior inspires others to grow in their faith and in your own response to God.

### Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
you are the Lord of all,  
yet you chose to be born among the poor, the son  
of a simple family.  
Teach us to love each other, to forgive each other,  
and to trust each other.  
You live and reign for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

### 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). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*