

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



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

December 29, 2024



REFLECTION

This passage seems like one of those stories that families love to tell again and again: "Remember that time Mom and Dad forgot me and left without me . . ." Because it is so familiar, we can easily identify with the emotions of the Holy Family in this story. Yet, in the midst of this very human story, we are met with the reality of who Jesus was, the incarnate Son of God, both human *and* divine. Jesus knew that he was God's Son and had a special purpose in life. His wisdom and insight impressed the teachers at the temple, foreshadowing the teaching Jesus would do in his adult ministry.

However, Jesus was also a human child who lived in a family. As such, his purpose at that moment in life was also to live as part of that family, to honor and obey his parents, and to grow to adulthood.

It can be comforting to remember that Jesus knows what it is like to be one of us, having to embrace the range of human experience while living out one's calling. Like Jesus, we all have to be patient while we grow into our purpose in life.

ACTION

Jesus was leaning into his calling by talking to the teachers in the temple. Do something this week to explore your calling. Reach out by mail, email, or social media to one or two experts in a field that interests you. Ask them to share insights and information to help you understand their work better. Imagine what this path might look like if you were to walk along it yourself!



Watch Ashley Stahl's TEDx talk on "Three Questions to Unlock Your Authentic Career." <https://youtu.be/vMiSf7LpFQE>

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Think about Jesus' humanity and divinity? How might he have reacted to some of the situations you experience in your daily life? How does this make you feel?
- ❖ What is your purpose or mission as a baptized son or daughter of God? How can this purpose inform your other purposes/callings in life?



December 29, 2024

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

LECTIONARY #17C

1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28 or Sirach 3:3-7, 14-17a

Psalms 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10 or 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

1 John 3:1-2, 21-24 or Colossians 2:12-21 or 12-17

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

The Gospel today provides us with the only story we have of Jesus in his adolescent years. The infancy narratives tell us of his birth, and we know his public ministry started just after his baptism when he was around thirty years old (Luke 3:23). In today's reading, Jesus is twelve. What we do know about Jesus' formative years is that he grew up in a family learning to love and live according to God's plan for him. The Feast of the Holy Family celebrates this human family. The reading reminds us that not everything happens according to plan in a family. Joy, love, and laughter go hand in hand with hardships, toil, and heartbreak. Jesus understood and experienced the fullness of this life as he grew up.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus experienced the fullness of humanity through his family.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Oh January 4, we celebrate the life of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821). She is the first person born in the United States to be canonized in the Church. As a young widow with five children, Elizabeth opened a Catholic boarding school dedicated to offering free education for girls, regardless of their financial situation. Other women came to help her,

and they became a religious community, the Sisters of Charity (later adopting the rule of the Daughters of Charity). This community, and others that followed, devoted themselves to the education of poor and needy children. They started orphanages and schools across the country, including the first parish school and first Catholic orphanage in the United States. Elizabeth is the patron saint of Catholic schools and teachers.

Church Teaching Connection

"The incarnation of the Word in a human family, in Nazareth, by its very newness changed the history of the world. . . . We need to contemplate . . . the marvel of the teachers of the Law who listened to the wisdom of the child Jesus. We then need to peer into those thirty long years when Jesus earned his keep by the work of his hands, reciting the traditional prayers and expressions of his people's faith and coming to know that ancestral faith until he made it bear fruit in the mystery of the Kingdom. This is the mystery of Christmas and the secret of Nazareth, exuding the beauty of family life!" (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 65).

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:

The Gospels are not historical documents as such, as they do not give a comprehensive narrative of each and every event and the time in which they occur. Rather, they are documents of faith which give witness to the most important moments of Jesus' ministry and life. Because of this, from the birth

narrative to Jesus' baptism by John, we only have today's Gospel reading to help us understand Jesus' youth. That this narrative about Jesus when he was twelve was included in the Gospel of Luke lets us know that it is an important part of understanding Jesus and his ministry.

Although Jesus' young life is mostly unknown to us, we can therefore suppose that it was probably unexceptional, apart from today's story. His upbringing must have been typical for his time period. Knowing what we do about Joseph and Mary, we know that he was raised in a faithful Jewish family that adhered to the Jewish religion and practices. Jesus understood what it was like to live in and be part of a human family, with all of its ups and downs.

► What has being part of a family taught you?

As part of their Jewish tradition, families would go to Jerusalem for Passover. This meant that Jews from all over would journey on pilgrimage to the city. There would be caravans in which many people would travel together, both to and from. When Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus, they assumed he was in their caravan with some of their relatives and continued on. It took a whole day for them to realize that Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem. Once they got back to Jerusalem, they couldn't find him for three days! It undoubtedly caused them anxiety, stress, and panic. When they did find him, he was teaching at the temple, dazzling the teachers with his knowledge and wisdom. We are told that Mary kept everything that happened in her heart. She most likely pondered Jesus' extraordinary show of wisdom, but also must have felt some heartache and anguish at losing him for three days, as well as some confusion as to why Jesus didn't seem concerned.

In today's feast of the Holy Family, we look toward Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as a model to follow in our own families. We, too, experience moments of joy and love, as well as times of tension, anxiety, and pain. Today's feast helps us to recognize that in the midst of any family's dynamic, it is faith in God that holds us together and brings us closer to one another.

► How does knowing that you are a child of God and part of God's family affect the way you live each day?

► How does it affect your relationship with your own family?

It is within the ordinary life of families—loving, working, struggling, grieving, rejoicing—that Jesus experienced the fullness of humanity. Just as Jesus said he could be found in his Father’s house, we gather in God’s house, the church, as a family of faith. Like Jesus, we pray that we can grow in holiness, wisdom, strength, and grace in every moment. No matter where we are, or what family we are in, we find our true home in Jesus.

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 106.

Jesus experienced the fullness of human life in his family.

Family life contains moments of joy and love, and times of suffering and pain.

Jesus grew in wisdom while he was part of a family.

Act on the Word

Growing in Faith

For this activity, you will need a whiteboard or poster paper, writing utensils, journals for the teens or sheets of paper.

Begin by leading a large group discussion about growing up in the faith. Be mindful of the fact that not all of the young people may have been raised in the faith. Together as a group, come up with shared moments along the faith journey that the young people might have experienced, like sacraments, liturgical seasons, religious education, youth Masses or retreats, and so on. Write them on the whiteboard, preferably in chronological order.

Once a good list has been compiled, have the teens find a quiet space on their own with a journal or loose paper. Ask them to write a timeline of their

own faith journey. They can include the moments on the board as a starting point but also encourage them to include moments that are more personal to them, including ways in which their own families celebrated the faith. Did they pray at meals, do service projects, or volunteer together? Do certain moments of their faith journey stand out to them? For instance, did they go on a mission trip or participate in an especially meaningful service project? Playing quiet music during this time can help the teens enter more deeply into this reflection.

Then ask the teens to gather in small groups of two to four people. Invite them to share some of their journey with one another, including some of their more significant moments that helped them to really grow in their faith. Remind the teens to be respectful of others’ stories and to be open to listening. Have the teens discuss with one another how their family played a role in their faith journey. Remind them that Jesus was part of a family of faith and that he was once the same age they are now.

Closing Prayer

Merciful God,

you gave us the example of the Holy Family to show us how to be in relation with our own families.

May we live with one another in peace, understanding, and patience.

May we extend kindness and forgiveness when necessary.

And may we always love one another.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, 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.