

Read

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3

Psalm 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6,
8-9

Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

LIVING THE WORD

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

December 27, 2020

REFLECTION

While only a few verses of the Gospel reading specifically speak of Jesus' family, Simeon's prophesy encapsulates the essence of Jesus' life and ministry. Discipleship is not always easy, and not even Mary is immune from the challenges that come with following Christ. Even so, it must have been incredibly difficult for Mary to hear of the sorrow that awaited her. May we follow Mary and Joseph's example of discipleship as we strive to better know, love, and serve Jesus. Like them, may we meet challenges with confidence in our own abilities and trust that God is with us.

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What are some challenges you encounter in your own life of discipleship?
- ❖ What role does your family play in your faith life?

ACTION

Use a prayer book, the internet, or other resources to find and pray Night Prayer (Compline) this week. Night Prayer is part of the Liturgy of the Hours, which is prayed by thousands of people throughout the world every day. Night Prayer is prayed at the end of your day and it includes the Cantic of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32) that is heard in today's Gospel reading.





December 27, 2020

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

LECTIONARY #17B

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3 or Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalms 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9 or
128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19 or
Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

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 Holy Family is an example for us of accepting God's will for our lives and following him faithfully. Mary and Joseph were chosen to care for the child Jesus. They did this by raising him in the Jewish tradition, remaining faithful to God's teachings, and allowing God's will to be done. The Holy Family's encounter with Simeon and Anna in the Temple is another revelation of God's mystery of salvation, that will be fulfilled in Jesus. Just like the shepherds who testify to the love of God, so too Simeon and Anna proclaim the Messiah that God has sent into the world. We are also called to share this Good News and acknowledge God's working in our lives.

Q FOCUS: *To recognize God's presence in the ordinary moments of our lives.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The hymn of praise that Simeon proclaims in today's Gospel reading is known as the Canticle of Simeon (see Luke 2:29-32). It is used in Night Prayer, as part of the Liturgy of the Hours. It is prayed throughout the year and is a wonderful way to end your day, by proclaiming God's faithfulness and the salvation that he offers to all people.

Church Teaching Connection

"Children's growth is a great joy for the family, we all know it. They are destined to grow and become strong, to acquire knowledge and receive the grace of God, just as happened to Jesus. He is truly one of us: the Son of God becomes a child, agrees to grow, to become strong; he is filled with knowledge, and the grace of God is upon him. Mary and Joseph have the joy of seeing all this in their son; and this is the mission to which the family is directed: to create conditions favourable to the harmonious and full growth of its children, so they may live a good life, worthy of God and constructive for the world" (Pope Francis, *Angelus* Message, December 31, 2017).

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 2:22-40

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.

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, *Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord*, and to offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: / "Now, Master, you may let your servant go / in peace, according to your word, / for my eyes have seen your salvation, / which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, / a light for revelation to the Gentiles, / and glory for your people Israel." The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted—and you yourself a sword will pierce—so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

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:

What begins as a routine part of the Jewish tradition for Mary and Joseph, presenting Jesus to God in the Temple, turns out to be yet another moment of God's revelation of Christ to the world. This is the first time Mary and Joseph have brought Jesus to the Temple and God uses the occasion to affirm the faith of two believers who have waited a long time for the Messiah. Through Simeon and Anna's words, others in the Temple come to learn about God fulfilling his promise to send the Messiah.

► **How do you think Mary and Joseph reacted to these declarations? Have they encountered similar proclamations?**

In some ways, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus must have had a normal family life. We know from the Gospel accounts that they participated in the usual Jewish traditions, but not much else is known of their home life. From later encounters Jesus has during his ministry, it sounds like all of those around the Holy Family considered them to be an average family. However, Mary and Joseph knew that Jesus was more than an ordinary boy—before his birth they had both been visited by an angel of God who informed them of Jesus' identity as the Messiah (Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38). Moments such as the arrival of the Magi or the shepherds, and the declarations of Simeon and Anna, reinforce the angel's message. It also helps them to grow in their understanding of how God's Son will extend salvation to all the world.

► **How did Simeon and Anna recognize Jesus as the Messiah and not just an ordinary infant?**

The Holy Spirit guided both Simeon and Anna to see what others might miss: God present on earth in the person of Jesus. They had been faithfully waiting for God to send his Anointed One (another way of referring to the Messiah) to save the people. They had no way of knowing when it would be; the Jewish people had been waiting for centuries for God to fulfill his promise. However, they did not grow weary of waiting for God and were able to recognize God's presence when they saw Jesus.

► **Have you waited for an answer to a prayer? How do you feel when you are able to recognize God's response?**

Simeon and Anna both respond by offering praise to God and sharing this Good News with others. Simeon's hymn of praise (also known as the Cantic of Simeon) and Anna's affirming words help to reveal the universal Messiah's arrival. The salvation offered by Christ is for all people. By placing this witness on the lips of laypeople, rather than the high priests in the Temple, we can also see that this message of God's salvation is for every person. When we consider the Holy Family, we see that from the beginning, God chose to reveal himself to the world in the everyday—an infant born to parents who had neither wealth nor status, yet they found favor with God for their faithfulness. By living a life of faithful discipleship, we also can encounter and witness to the Savior of the world.

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 98.

The witness of Simeon and Anna encourage us to share the Good News with others.

We can recognize God's gifts to the world through prayer and discernment.

God speaks to us through our everyday actions and events.

Act on the Word

A Different View

You will need Bibles and writing materials to complete this activity.

There are several figures in today's Gospel, and they all provide a unique perspective about God's promise

of salvation. Divide the young people into four groups. Assign each group one of the following people; Mary, Joseph, Simeon, or Anna. Using Bibles, have each group respond to the following questions. Some of these questions will challenge the young people to think beyond the Gospel passage and place themselves in the context of the story. Once the groups have had some time to reflect and respond, bring everyone back together to discuss their responses.

- ✧ How has this person been waiting for the Messiah?
- ✧ How does this person respond to God's presence in his or her life?
- ✧ What is reason for this person's actions?
- ✧ How do others respond to this person's actions?

Closing Prayer

Holy One,
you dwell in eternity, where there are no years,
months, or hours.
But we, your people, mark the shortness of time.
Help us to remain one in you and in peace with
one another as we claim the bond of humanity
that unites us.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
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.