

The Holy Family

First Sunday of Christmas • Sunday between Christmas and New Year, or 30 December

Principal Service readings

1 Samuel 2.18-20,26	Samuel in the Lord's service
Psalms 148 [or 148.7-14]	The praise of all creation
Colossians 3.12-17	Let the Word of Christ find a home in you
Luke 2.41-52	The boy Jesus stays behind in the Temple

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Jesus among the teachers of the law

⁴¹Every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' ⁴⁹He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

The hidden life at Nazareth resumed

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.
Luke 2.41-52 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

After showing Jesus' parents presenting the infant Jesus in the temple (5.22-40) Luke again presents Mary and Joseph fulfilling their religious obligations (2.41-42). They are bewildered as Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem when they return to Nazareth. When they return to Jerusalem and eventually find Jesus, they question him: 'Why have you treated us like this?' (2.48). Jesus replies with a surprising answer: "Why were you looking for me?" (2.49). Then, explaining himself: 'Did you not know that I must be in my father's house?' (2.49). Luke tells that they did not understand him (2.50).

Jesus then goes back with his parents to Nazareth (2.51). Jesus is growing up, and his parents also are growing in faith. Luke tells us again (see also 2.18) that 'Mary treasured these things in her heart' (2.51), indicating that she is becoming the model disciple.

The purpose of Luke's story is not biographical but christological, attesting that Jesus was the Son of God, even as a boy. He worked similar signs and used theological language just as he would in his adult ministry.

Quotations

1

However strong family unity may be and should be, it does not put an end to the personality and responsibility of its members. On the contrary, family bonds are meant to reinforce the tasks and the mission of each member.

Sharing the word through the liturgical year / Gustavo Gutiérrez. 1997 [orig.1995]

2

To gather round the Bethlehem grotto contemplating there the Holy Family, enables us to appreciate the gift of family intimacy in a special

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

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way, and spurs us to offer human warmth and concrete solidarity in those unfortunately numerous situations which, for various reasons, lack peace, harmony, in a word, lack "family".

Angelus, 29 December 1996 – Pope John Paul II

Related topics

For further study:

Christian family; incarnation; christology; manifestation; faith

Closing Prayer

As your sons and daughters, O loving God,
we come before you in thanksgiving,
called and united by your eternal Word.

Teach us to ponder the mystery of Nazareth,
that we may always find in you
the source of our strength
and the unity of our families.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
in the splendour of eternal light,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · The Holy Family, Year C²

CPL • LBC Year C Holy Family.odt • 2022-10-21

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*