

Scripture Study

Feast of the Holy Family—Cycle C



Opening prayer

Sirach 3:2-7,12-14

(Psalm 128:1-5)

Colossians 3:12-21

Luke 2:41-52

Overview of the Gospel:

- The Feast of the Holy Family, which developed in the 17th century, honors the family group of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Built on the Gospel accounts, this family is looked upon as a model of ideal family life. To promote family life and build up devotion to the Holy Family, Pope Benedict XV established this feast for the Universal Church in 1921.
- This story, which we know as the Fifth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary (like many other stories found in the “infancy narratives”) appears only in Luke’s Gospel. The infancy narratives end in the same location as they began, in the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 1:8).
- All male Jews ages twelve and older were required to make three pilgrimages to Jerusalem every year—at the feasts of Passover, Weeks (Pentecost), and Booths (Tabernacles). Custom excused those who lived far away from the feasts of Weeks and Booths, but not Passover. Even though only older males were under obligation, often the entire family would go, traveling in large parties or caravans (males and females with small children traveling separately until making camp at evening) for convenience, fellowship, and safety.
- This is the first time we hear about Jesus since the return of the Holy Family to Nazareth from Egypt, where they fled to escape the wrath of King Herod (Matthew 2:16-23). It is the last time we hear about him until his appearance at the Jordan to be baptized by John (Luke 3:1ff). This undocumented period of time is often called “the hidden years” of Jesus’ life.

Questions:

- What was the significance of this Feast, for which Joseph and Mary made a pilgrimage from Nazareth to Jerusalem every year (see Exodus 12; Deuteronomy 16:1-8)?
- How much does Jesus seem to know about his mission? How much do his parents know (Luke 1:26-56; Matthew 1:18—2:23)? If Jesus is God, how could he “*advance* in wisdom and age and in favor before God and man” (verse 52)? See CCC 472.
- Why do you think Luke included this episode in his Gospel? How did Luke know about this, and other details surrounding Jesus’ birth and childhood (see verse 51)? In this same verse, what is Jesus attitude to Mary and Joseph? How is this a reflection of the First Reading?
- What three qualities did Jesus display before the teachers in verses 46-47? What two reactions did he provoke by his actions in these two verses?
- Why do you think Jesus was “surprised” that his parents were looking for him? Where should they have looked? How have you looked for Jesus in all the wrong places?
- Has your hunger for God ever been misunderstood by your family? How? How do you maintain a healthy balance between daily responsibilities and serving God?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 531-534, 583, 503, 2599, 517, 472

Closing prayer

I turn to you, dear parents, and implore you to imitate the Holy Family of Nazareth. -St. John Vianney

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Scripture: *Luke 2:41-52*

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And 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 increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

Meditation: What binds families together? Jesus came to show us the way to the Father's house in



heaven – a way of unconditional love and unity, peace and harmony, trust and submission as members of God's family. Luke tells us in his Gospel account that the boy Jesus was subject to Mary his mother and Joseph his foster father. He traveled with his parents every year from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. This eighty mile journey normally took three days. So families often traveled in large groups, for safety and comfort. The account of Jesus' early life at Nazareth is mostly hidden. But Luke gives us a glimpse when Jesus goes up to the temple at Jerusalem for his first Passover at the dawn of his manhood (usually the age of twelve for Jewish males). It was at this key turning point in his earthly life that Jesus took the name "father" from Joseph and addressed it to God his Father in heaven. Just as the prophet Samuel heard the call of the Lord at a very young age, Jesus in his youth recognized that he has

been given a call by his heavenly Father. His answer to his mother's anxious inquiry reveals his trusting faith and confident determination to pursue his heavenly Father's will. *Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?*

While Jesus recognized his unique call, he, nonetheless, submitted himself with love and obedience to Joseph and Mary and waited for the time when his call would be fulfilled. Like all godly parents, Mary and Joseph raised their son in the fear and wisdom of God. The Lord's favor is with those who listen to his word with trust and obedience. Do you know the joy of submission to God?

Our Heavenly Father calls each of us to a unique task and mission in this life. We may not discover or understand it fully, but if we cooperate with God he will use us for his purpose and plan. With the call God gives grace – grace to say "yes" to his will and grace to persevere through obstacles and trials. Do you recognize God's call on your life and do you trust in his grace?

"Lord Jesus, you came to restore us to unity with the Father in heaven. Where there is division, bring healing and pardon. May all peoples and families find peace, wholeness, and unity in you, the Prince of Peace and Savior of the world."

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