

Scripture Study

Feast of the Holy Family – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Sirach 3:2-7,12-14

(Ps 128:1-5)

Colossians 3:12-21

Matthew 2:13-15,19-23

Overview of the Gospel:

- Today we hear of the escape of the Holy Family into Egypt. The story of the flight into Egypt is contained only in the Gospel of Matthew. This Gospel, directed at Matthew's Jewish Christian audience, brings out the point that Jesus is the new Moses and the new Israel, and the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.
- The second chapter of Matthew emphasizes the parallels between the life of Jesus with that of Moses: both survived the slaughter of the innocents (Matthew 2:16 = Exodus 1:22), both had to flee (Matthew 2:14 = Exodus 2:15), both returned (Matthew 2:19 = Exodus 4:19), both led the people out of slavery and to the Promised Land (Moses to the Land of Canaan, Jesus to the New Jerusalem).
- We also see how God works through the structure of the family. Joseph as head of the Holy Family is the most responsible for their well-being (Ephesians 5:21—6:3). By being both obedient and prudent, he fulfilled God's plan.

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, the Jewish sage Ben-Sira, commenting on the commandment to honor ones father and mother, offers counsel on relations between children and their parents. How well is this followed in your family? What rewards does Scripture promise here and elsewhere to those who follow this commandment (see Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2)?
- How does the 2nd Reading (including verses 18-21, a portion of Sacred Scripture sometimes omitted by lectors at Mass) form a template for relations within the family?
- Based on Herod's response to the news of the coming of the Messiah, what kind of person do you think he was? What does it say about his view of the Messiah?
- What is Matthew's point in emphasizing God's watchfulness over Jesus? In fulfillment of Hosea's and Jeremiah's prophecies (verses 18-18, 23)?
- What relocation options face Joseph? How did God use prophecy, dreams, faith and circumstances to guide him?
- When, like Herod, do you feel threatened by Jesus' Kingship? How do you react?
- From Joseph's responsiveness, what do you learn about faith and obedience? How long would it take you to say "yes" if God asked you to relocate?
- Consider how God led Joseph to care for the Holy Family and protect them from danger. How have you noticed the Holy Spirit guiding your life? How sure of his guidance have you been? Despite uncertainty, how have you followed his guidance?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 530, 333, 2204-06

Closing Prayer

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

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

-St. John Vianney

"Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream..."

Scripture: *Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23*

Now when they [the Magi] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus reigned over Judea in Place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken



by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Meditation: Like all godly parents, Joseph and Mary raised the child Jesus in the fear and wisdom of the Lord. Joseph was given a unique task as the guardian and protector of Mary and of Jesus. What can we learn from the example and witness of Joseph? Joseph is a man of God, a man of unquestioning obedience and willing service. He is a man of prayer and a man of God's word. Through faith he recognized the hand of God in the mystery of the Incarnation

— the Son of God taking flesh as the son of Mary. Joseph is a man of action, diligent in the care of his family and ready to do the Lord's bidding. Joseph fearlessly set aside his own plans when God called him to "take to the road" and to leave his familiar surroundings — his home, friends and relatives, and the security of his livelihood in order to pursue a hidden mission God entrusted to him as the guardian of the newborn King. God has a plan for each of us. With the plan God gives grace and the assurance of his guiding hand and care. Do you trust Him for his plan for your life? Are you willing to sacrifice your own plans for God's plan? Are you willing to give God unquestioning service and to pursue whatever mission he gives you?

"Lord, make me a faithful servant of your word and guardian of your truth. Help me to obey you willingly, like Joseph and Mary, with unquestioning trust and with joyful hope."

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