

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY & JOSEPH

December 30, 2018 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask Him to help us to hear the word He wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Father, help us to live as the Holy Family, united in respect and love. Bring us to the joy and peace of your eternal home. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.*

Response to last week's word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: Were we to forget its placement in the cycle of feasts that make up the Christmas season, the feast of the Holy Family could easily be looked upon as little more than a pious devotion focused on an unattainable ideal. Nevertheless, this feast is about the mystery of the Incarnation, the firm conviction we hold that Jesus is both Son of God, fully divine, and Son of Mary, fully human, and that mystery has saving implications for each of us. Today's readings remind us of how fully human are the origins of that mystery, rooted in families willing to make God's will first in their lives.

Let us listen to God's word to hear what it is He wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: 1Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

Commenting on this text, the authors of the *Living Word* (2004) write:

The author of the first Book of Samuel wanted to show his audience the many ways that God was guiding the fortunes of the Jewish people throughout their history. He also wished to show how important it was that the people be prepared to submit to the Lord's will for them. In this particular cycle of stories, the figures of Hannah and her husband, Elkanah, are held up as exemplary because of their willingness to give to the Lord a child destined to be a chosen instrument of his. The piety of the couple is evident in the sacrifice they make: giving to the Lord's service their longed-for child. Subsequent stories of the exploits of Samuel reveal just how significant their sacrifice was to be in God's plan. This text is clearly in the background of Luke's infancy narrative, in which he describes how the parents of Jesus have to make a similar sacrifice of their son in order for God's plan to unfold in Jesus' life. Like Hannah and Elkanah, Mary and Joseph cannot grasp the full significance of the role their son is destined to play in God's plan. Nonetheless, their piety leads them to obedience, even though "they did not understand." (Luke 2:50)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 84

This psalm speaks about the beauty of dwelling in the house of the Lord.

SECOND READING: 1John 3:1-2, 21-24

This reading speaks about our adoption into the household of God. As children of God, we are called to keep God's commandments.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 2:41-52

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL COMMENTARY: Luke 2:41-52

Let us now read the Gospel commentary privately underlining anything that strikes us.

The key element of this story is Jesus' declaration that he must be in his "Father's house." When Mary and Joseph find their lost child, Mary questions Jesus why he has done this to them. Jesus' response is one of surprise. Mary's reference to Joseph as "your father" is paralleled with Jesus' reference to God as "my Father, and therein lies the main point in this story—Jesus' response signals:

- his single-minded devotion to his heavenly Father
- how his devotion to his heavenly Father will transcend his love and devotion to his earthly parents

Yet in this story, Jesus shows himself faithful to both. In doing what he did in the Temple, he was obeying God, but then we are told he goes home with his parents to Nazareth and is obedient to them. Obedience is in fact an underlying theme in this Gospel. Four times in this passage, Luke says that the actions of Mary, Joseph and Jesus are carried out in accord with the law.

On a lighter side, we can say that this story shows us that even in the best of families, things can go wrong. Perhaps, we could say that Joseph and Mary should have been more vigilant of their young son, or that Jesus should have told his parents where he was.

Having given the participants time to read the commentary, move into the faith-sharing questions.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse in the Gospel caught your attention. Why?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. When Joseph and Mary find Jesus, she says to him: "Son, why have you done this to us. Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." The feeling of anxiety is not a pleasant one. What causes you anxiety these days? What helps you deal with anxiety?

3. The commentary speaks about Jesus as being obedient to both God and parents. What helps you to walk in obedience in God's word?

4. What are some ingredients of a holy family? What are blocks and obstacles to becoming a holy family?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

JOURNALING: *Having listened to God's word and listened to others reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as He asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can *act* on this week's readings. Some suggestions: If there is a family member with whom you are distant, call or write to him/her. Pray often for your family if you don't already do so. Reach out to a neighbor who lives alone and has very few friends.

SHARED PRAYER ON THE READINGS

Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestions: "Lord, please help me to see my family and all families—no matter their configuration—as holy." "Lord, help us to seek your will and be obedient in all things."

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

FACILITATOR: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Loving Father, you have created all who have ever lived in your image and likeness. Help us to recognize all others as our brothers and sisters and to honor, respect, forgive, and love them as your children. Together, enable us to bring your peace and justice, healing and reconciliation to our world.



"A New Intimacy with Christ"
A Day of Reflection presented by
Deacon Jim & Pat Brogdan
Sat. January 19, 8:30 am – 3 pm
Divine Mercy Parish, Merritt Island
Tickets \$12/ Info 321-405-2374
sccspacecoast@gmail.com