

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph Year C

December 29, 2024

First Reading

Sir 3:2-6. 12-14

A reading from the Book of Ecclesiasticus

Whoever fears the Lord honours his parents.

The Lord honours the father in his children,
and upholds the rights of a mother over her sons.
Whoever respects his father is atoning for his sins,
he who honours his mother is like someone amassing a fortune.
Whoever respects his father will be happy with children of his own,
he shall be heard on the day when he prays.
Long life comes to him who honours his father,
he who sets his mother at ease is showing obedience to the Lord.
My son, support your father in his old age,
do not grieve him during his life.
Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy,
do not despise him in your health and strength;
for kindness to a father shall not be forgotten
but will serve as reparation for your sins.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 127:1-5. R. see v.1

(R.) Happy are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Second Reading

Col 3:12-21

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians

Concerning the Christian life in the world.

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, give way to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and treat them with gentleness. Children, be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. Parents, never drive your children to resentment or you will make them feel frustrated.

Gospel Acclamation

Col 3:15. 16

Alleluia, alleluia!

May the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
and the fullness of his message live within you.

Alleluia

Gospel

Lk 2:41-52

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

His parents found him in the temple, sitting among the learned men, listening to them.

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was with the caravan, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.

Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.' 'Why were you looking for me?' he replied. 'Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?' But they did not understand what he meant.

He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.

The Joy and the Pain of Parenting

Reflection on the Gospel-Feast of the Holy Family Year C (Luke 2:41-52)

The time between Christmas and New Year is often family time. It is also a time to think about what family means. For many, it is a challenge to juggle various conflicting commitments. We do our best and trust that everyone will understand the difficult choices that sometimes have to be made. It is now ten years since the first phase of the Synod on the Family in Rome. So much has happened globally since then that we are in danger of letting that significant event pass into history without giving it the ongoing attention it deserves. The Pope's concluding words of concern for "difficult cases and wounded families" merit our attention. For Pope Francis, the Synod was "about bearing witness to

everyone that, for the Church, the Gospel continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all those who would 'indoctrinate' it in dead stones to be hurled at others." The pope reasserted his constant message that the Church's "first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God's mercy."

Today's readings invite us to focus on family relationships. At a very basic level, we are all "children of God" (1 John 3:1), invited to remember the love that God has "lavished on us". In the gospel reading, Luke presents the young Jesus coming with his parents from Nazareth to Jerusalem "as usual" for the great feast of Passover. He is twelve years of age, capable in that culture of making quite serious decisions for himself. He does just that, much to the consternation of his parents, who become aware only after a day's journey that he has remained in Jerusalem and has not joined the extended family group or synodia for the return journey to Nazareth. Mary and Joseph are not well pleased. They express their concern but fail to understand his response: he is primarily God's child and must follow God's call first and foremost. This does not preclude obedience to his parents. It does, however, foreshadow the pain involved in parenting this young man whose mission will take him along paths they would never have chosen for him. This may sound familiar to those who are parents of young adults.

As Luke's story unfolds, Joseph fades from the narrative. Mary lives in the reflective way we are all called to live, "storing all these things in her heart". Sometimes God's call to children is in tension with the wishes or hopes of their parents. Children are first of all "children of God". Much as we might want to hold on to them, we do so at our peril, while respecting the fact that many are constrained by lack of employment and affordable housing to remain with their parents well into adulthood. We try to understand their choices, we do everything we can to nurture their uniqueness, and we pray that they will grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God as responsible members of the whole Earth community.

Veronica Lawson RSM

