

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
2022—C Cycle



Mary nursing the infant Jesus with
his grandmother (?) and Joseph
looking on by El Greco (1595)

Opening Prayer
(edited for use here)

God, our Father,
we are brothers and sisters in Jesus your Son,
one family in the Spirit of your love.
Bless me with the joy of a loving heart.
Make me patient and kind,
gentle and generous,
welcoming to those in need.
Help me to live your forgiveness and peace.
Protect all families with your loving care,
especially those for whom I now pray:
[Pause to remember family members and others by name].

Increase my faith.
Strengthen my hope.
Keep me safe in your love.
Fill me with gratitude for the gift of life.
This I ask, through Christ our Lord.
Amen

Source: [Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference](#)
[Prayer for the World Meeting of Families \(2018\)](#)

Introduction to the Feast of the Holy Family

[Caryll Houselander](#) is the go-to author for this feast day: "... all that is recorded of (Joseph) is that he protected Our Lady in Advent . . . that he was the first to protect the unknown, unguessed Christ in another... and he was the defense of the Infant Christ, when he was defenseless and threatened by Herod. A just man and a strong

man. Love was in him like the crystal in the rock.”

—from [*The Passion of the Infant Christ*](#)

Readings

1 Samuel 1: 20-22, 24-28 “Hannah conceived and... bore a son she called Samuel.”

Psalms 84: 2-3, 5-6, 9-10 “How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts.”

1 John 3: 1-2, 21-24 “See what love the Father has bestowed on us!”

Luke 2: 41-52 (Mary said to Jesus, “Son, why have you done this to us?”)

A Reading from the First Book of Samuel (1: 20-22, 24-28)

“When Elkanah slept with his wife, Hannah, Yahweh took compassion on her, and she became pregnant. She gave birth to a son and called him Samuel because, she said, ‘I have asked Yahweh to give him to me.’

“Once more Elkanah went to the temple with his family to offer his yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow to Yahweh. Hannah would not go along but she said to her husband, ‘I will bring the child there as soon as he is weaned. He shall be presented to Yahweh and stay there forever.’

“When the child was weaned, Hannah took him with her along with a three-year-old bull, a measure of flour and a flask of wine, and she brought him to Yahweh’s house at Shiloh. The child was still young. After they had slain the bull, they brought the child to Eli.

“Hannah exclaimed: ‘Oh, my lord, look! I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to Yahweh. I asked for this child and Yahweh granted me the favor I begged of him. I think Yahweh is now asking for this child. As long as he lives, he belongs to Yahweh.’”

Personal Reflection

It starts with an ordinary couple living an ages-old drama in a Judean hill town. Society at that time in Jewish history allowed a man to have as many wives as he could maintain. Customs of the time measured a married woman’s worth by the children she bore. Elkanah loved the childless Hannah. Yahweh blessed their prayer, giving them Samuel, not only as their son but as a prophet for the Jewish people.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Yahweh seems at times to choose his servants and prophets precisely from hitherto childless families. We find this pattern beginning with the birth of Isaac, son of Abraham and Sarah, and centuries later in the birth of John the Baptist.

“I asked for this child and Yahweh granted me the favor I begged of him. I think Yahweh is now asking for this child.”

— *If I’m a parent, how do I personally relate to this? In what sense has God asked me to give my child(ren) back to him?*

— *If I have no children of my own, how might God be calling me to care for God's vulnerable children in my extended family, my local area, and around the globe?*

Psalm 84 (2-3, 15-16, 18-19)

A song of love and longing for God's temple.

Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.

How lovely are your rooms, O Yahweh of hosts!
My soul yearns; pines, for the courts of Yahweh.
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God
Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.

Happy are those who live in your house,
continually singing your praise!
Happy, the pilgrims whom you strengthen,
to make the ascent to you.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.

O Yahweh of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob!
Look upon our shield, O God;
look upon the face of your Anointed!
Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.

[Chris Brunelle](#) chants [Psalm 84](#).

Personal Reflection

The home of Yahweh here on earth! What can this mean? There is no change in God. God never moves into a new house or a new person. Since God created universe and the "heavens," no dwelling place is new and strange to our God. Only humans and material things change!

Yahweh lives everywhere but has consecrated certain physical places (shrines and sacred places, including our own homes) where people can meet the divine presence and feel that presence more intimately. In our God we find an all-encompassing presence. In our God we find peace on earth and a breadth of love that encourages even the sparrow to build its nest.

"Happy are those who live in your house...."

— *What is my personal role in providing a pleasant and peaceful home for those who share my living space during this post-Christmas season? In what area(s) could I do more or better?*

— *In what ways am I an obstacle to familial peace and joy in my home? What am I willing to do to change that pattern, not just during this special season but all year long?*

From the First Letter of St. John (3: 1-2, 21-24)

“See what singular love the Father has for us: we are called children of God, and we really are. This is why the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children. What we shall be has not yet been shown. Yet, when he appears in his glory, we know, that we shall be like him, for then we shall see him as he is.

“When our conscience does not condemn us, dear friends, we may have complete confidence in God. Then, whatever we ask, we shall receive, since we keep his commands and do what pleases him. His command is, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and that we love one another as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commands remains in God and God in him. It is by the Spirit God has given us, that we know he lives in us.”

Personal Reflection

If we truly believe we are God’s children, we must live as such. How can we prove we are God’s children? By living according to the criteria we have been taught: (1) breaking away from sin, (2) keeping the dual commandments of love, and (3) openly proclaiming our faith in word and action.

We have many ways in which to demonstrate we are God’s children. Here John calls our attention to two key truths:

- We are born as sons and daughters of God, but to become *like* God we must strive every day to accept our birthright and live each day in faith;
- We are children destined to return to our Father.

God has a unique and transcendent destiny for each of us, not only in this life but in Afterlife. Upon our awakening each day, God invites us to live in awareness of grace that strengthens us in every aspect of our lives. Only by *believing* this truth and *living* by it can we attain our goal.

“His command is that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and that, we love one another.” That I “believe” and “love” is all God asks of me. Faith *and* love encompass everything I do.

— *Which do I personally find easier, believing or loving? Since for God the two virtues are inseparable, how am I being called today to give faith and love equal importance in how I think and how I live with the people who share my life?*

— *How often do I spend my day mindless of the destiny that awaits me today, tomorrow, and on the day of my death? If my answer is, “Hardly ever,” what will (not can) I do during this Christmas season to become more conscious of God’s love for me and my eternal destiny?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Luke (2: 41-52)

“Every year, the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover, as was customary. And when Jesus was twelve years old, he went up with them, according to the custom of this feast.

“After the festival was over, they returned, but the boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and his parents did not know it. They assumed that he was in their group of travelers, and, after walking the whole day, they looked for him among their relatives and friends.



Young Jesus in the Temple
by [Heinrich Hoffman](#) (1824-1911)

“As they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem, searching for him; and, on the third day, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. And all the people were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

“His parents were surprised when they saw him; and his mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I were

worried while searching for you.’

“Then he said to them, ‘Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’ But they did not understand this answer.

“Jesus went down with them, returning to Nazareth, and he continued to be obedient to them. As for his mother, she kept all these things in her heart.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and age.”

Personal Reflection

It’s commonly believed that Luke spent time with Mary (probably in Ephesus where she lived). In the above passage, he shares a story he might have heard directly from Jesus’ mother.

On Jesus’ first Passover visit to Jerusalem, he acted like a typical “early teenager.” In the shade of the temple galleries, teachers of the law invited pilgrims to dialogue with them. Jesus must have been so enthralled with “his Father’s house” that he lost track of time (we’ll give him the benefit of a doubt). Does this sound familiar, parents of teens (past or present)? Mary and Joseph lost track of him in the crowded city. By not communicating with them, Jesus caused his parents severe fright and pain.

The Gospel for the Feast of the Holy Family highlights this parent-teen misunderstanding. When Mary and Joseph finally found their son on the Temple grounds, the frazzled parents expressed their frustration and fear that something terrible might have happened to him: “Why have you done this?”

In typical preteen behavior, Jesus expressed surprise that his parents had worried about him. “Did you not know...?” But he also understood their concern and yielded to their parental concern and authority.

“‘Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?’”

— *If I’m a parent, what similar experience have I had with my teenager(s)? What were the circumstances? How did the episode end? What did I learn from that experience?*

Journaling/Prayer Prompts

What insights have I gained from reflecting on this weekend's liturgical readings?

Suggested prompt:

— *After reflecting on the scriptures, what touches my heart the most?*

We mustn't simply be grateful "recipients" of God's good gifts. We also need to "give back."

— *How will this week's Scriptures impact the way I think, live, love, and "give back" during the week ahead?*

Based on this weekend's Scripture readings, what does the Jesus ask me to do TODAY regarding . . .

(1) the quality of love I bring to my personal relationships...

(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God's love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

Who needs to hear from me this week some expression of love?

Who needs to receive a moment of laughter and personal concern?

Why do I hesitate?

In light of this weekend's Scriptures, take some time to write about events occurring in your life this week and what you see happening in the world.

For Inspirational Viewing / Listening

Video:

[Bishop Barron](#) on [Biblical Family Values](#) (8.5 min)

Music:

[Mary & Joseph's Song](#)—words and music by [Marcia Boland](#)

Preview of Next Session

The Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60: 1-6 "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem!"

Psalms 72: 1-2, 78, 10-13 "He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor she shall save."

Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6 "You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit."

Matthew 2: 1-12 "Behold, magi came from the east."

Prayer

(edited for use here)

A Prayer to the Holy Family

Jesus,

Son of God and Son of Mary and Joseph, bless my family.
Graciously inspire in us the unity, peace, and mutual love
you found in your own family in the little town of Nazareth.

Mary,

mother of Jesus, my spiritual mother,
nourish my family with your faith and your love.
Keep me close to your Son, Jesus, in all my sorrows and joys.

Joseph,

foster father to Jesus, guardian and spouse of Mary,
keep my family safe from harm.
Help us in times of discouragement and anxiety.

Holy Family of Nazareth,

help my family become more like yours.
Help us to be instruments of your peace.
Grant us that same love, strengthened by grace.
May our love prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials
through which we sometimes pass.
May we always have God at the center of our hearts and homes
until we are all one family, happy and at peace
in our eternal home with you.
Amen.

The Sunday readings are from [*Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition*](#)

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Follow the link to the book trailer for [*Inspector Javert: at the Gates of Hell*](#)

The book is now available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and to order from local booksellers.