On the first Sunday of the Christmas season, we honor and extol Jesus' earthly family, whose loving bond is a model for all Christian families. From the time Mary cared for her Son in her womb to when her Son called down to her from the cross, each member of the Holy Family put the others above themselves. Their love for each other and the way they nurtured that love every day is worthy of our praise and imitation. May our families be blessed in the love of the Holy Family.

As we gather let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith p.
I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (*bow as we say*) ***and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*** **For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Introductory Rite:
Greeting:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

Penitential Rite: p.
Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to participate in this sacred celebration.

I confess to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault; therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints, and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Opening Prayer:
O God, who were pleased to give us the shining example of the Holy Family, graciously grant that we may imitate them in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bods of charity, and so, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal rewards.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading p.
A reading from the Prophet Sirach *Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14*

God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins and preserves himself from them. When he prays, he is heard; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, and, when he prays, is heard. Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother.

My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him; revile him not all the days of his life; kindness to a father will not be forgotten, firmly planted against the debt of your sins —a house raised in justice to you.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Responsorial Psalm *Psalm 128: 1-5*

R/. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways**.**
R/. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways!
For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored. **R/.**

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home;
your children like olive plants around your table. **R/.**

Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion: may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life. **R/.**

Second Reading

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians *Colossians 3: 12-21*

Brothers and sisters: Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel *Luke 2: 22-40*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke **Glory to you, Lord**

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, They took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, *Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord,* and to offer the sacrifice of *a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,* in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should

not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, He took him into his arms and blessed God, saying: "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted —and you yourself a sword will pierce— so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem. When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection on the Word:

- Fidelity and devotion are virtues we hear extolled throughout today's readings, both within one's family and toward God. Sirach champions them in the first reading, counseling adult children to care for their parents in their old age, to not allow their devotion to one's father fail when he most needs it. Paul counsels the Colossians to exercise all the virtues that stem from fidelity and devotion, especially love, which drives and expresses them all. Mary and Joseph bring their newborn son to the temple in fidelity to the Mosaic law, where they encounter Simeon and Anna, who out of devotion to God stay in the temple all the rest of their days. It is through our fidelity and devotion to our family members and to God that we—to put it in the language of the responsorial psalm—truly walk in the Lord's ways.

- Simeon and Anna waited all their lives for the opportunity we hear of in today's Gospel. Like all those who worshiped in the temple, they awaited the Messiah, who would save their people and their nation. Unlike most people, they were blessed with the Holy Spirit and had the gift of a special kind of sight—the ability to see with eyes of faith. Because of this ability and because the Holy Spirit guided them to the temple, where they spent their days in prayer, they were present when Mary and Joseph brought their infant to the temple and they realized at once who he was. The One they waited their entire lives to see we can now see each Sunday when we gather to celebrate Mass. We can see Jesus in the Eucharist, in scripture, and in the body of Christ gathered around the altar. All it takes is the eyes of faith, the eyes that transformed the lives of Simeon and Anna.

Question of the Week

How can each of the families I belong to (household, extended family, workplace, faith community) grow in holiness? How can I help accomplish this?

Prayer of the Faithful:

Let us offer our prayers of petition to God, aware that just like Anna and Simeon in today's Gospel, we stand in the presence of Christ.

- For the Church, that God's love and mercy may be revealed through the way we treat the members of our families, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- That despite differences in culture, ethnicity, language, and home, we may see all people in the world as sisters and brothers, all of us children of God, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For world leaders, that they may work to break down barriers that divide us and build bridges that guide us to the way of peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For those whose families are experiencing strife, separation, or grief, that the Holy Spirit may bring healing to all its members, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For all those who are away from home this holiday season, that they may find a home in this faith community, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For what else should we pray? Let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Loving God, you blessed Mary and Joseph, whom you chose, as they raised your Son in the Holy Family. Bless us, your chosen ones, with our families, as you grant the prayers we make today, through your Son, our long-awaited Savior, Jesus Christ.

Communion Rite

The Lord's Prayer: p.
Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Rite of Peace:
The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:
Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:
Bring those you refresh with this heavenly Sacrament, most merciful Father, to imitate constantly the example of the Holy Family, so that, after the trials of this world, we may share their company for ever.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Concluding Rite:
Final Blessing:
May the Lord bless us, ✠ protect us from all evil and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen**

Go in peace! **Thanks be to God.**