



The Catholic Community of Divine Savior

Family Faith Focus

Volume 8, Issue 22

December 29, 2019

Dates to Remember

- December 29: Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
- December 31: Vigil of the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God — Mass at 4:00 PM
- January 1: Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God — 9:00 AM Mass
- January 5: Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord **Children's Liturgy of the Word, 10:30 AM Mass**
- January 12: Feast of the Baptism of the Lord— FCFF Liturgy and Formation Session, 8:00-10:30 AM

Let Us Pray

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, bless and protect our family. Strengthen us that we may remain faithful in our love for one another through the joys and sorrows of each day. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son, now and forever. Amen.

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Matthew 2: 13-15, 19-23

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you.

Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, *Out of Egypt I called my son.*

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, *He shall be called a Nazorean.*

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

Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Col. 3:12

Sunday Gospel Connection: December 29, 2019

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, Cycle A

Matthew 12: 13-15, 19-23

Gospel Background: Today we celebrate the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. As we do so, our Gospel invites us to consider Joseph's protection of Jesus in the face of danger. Just as in the announcement of Jesus' birth, an angel appears to Joseph in a dream. The angel warns him of Herod's plans to harm Jesus. Joseph follows the command of the angel and takes Joseph and Mary to Egypt, returning only after receiving word in another dream that it was safe to do so.



This feast is part of the Christmas season, so we should look at today's Gospel in the context of what Scripture tells us about Jesus' birth. Today's reading is found in the Gospel of Matthew, following the story of the visit of the Magi. Recall that Matthew's story about the birth of Jesus makes Joseph the primary character. Among Matthew's themes in this infancy narrative is Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the messiah. Indeed, the story of the Holy Family's flight to Egypt recalls the story of Moses in the Book of Exodus.

It should also be noted that today's reading omits the verses that recount Herod's order of the massacre of the infant boys in and around Bethlehem. We mark this event on the Feast of the Holy Innocents on December 28.

These events remind us of the difficult reality of Jesus' birth. While the story of the Magi's visit will be recalled in our liturgy on the Feast of the Epiphany, our Christmas celebration is made more sober by the recollection that not everyone received Christ's birth with joy or obedience. Herod's jealousy and malice contrast with Joseph's obedience to the words of the angel. The Holy Family's escape to Egypt and the massacre that Jesus is saved from remind us of the struggles and sacrifices that are required as preparation for God's salvation.

Family Connection: In the midst of the Christmas season, it is quite appropriate that our liturgy asks us to pause to consider the Holy Family. In today's Gospel, we hear about how Joseph protected Jesus from danger by relocating the family to Egypt in obedience to God. Following the model of the Holy Family, we might use this feast to recall the responsibility that each family member has to contribute to the good of the family and recommit ourselves to one another.

Gather together as a family to work on a common project. You might prepare a meal together, prepare a special dessert, or perhaps do a craft together. When you finish, talk about how each family member contributed to the common project. Remind one another that each member of the family contributes to the good of the whole family. Recall that Jesus was also part of a family and that this Sunday we celebrate the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Read together today's Gospel, Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23. Pray together that your family will continue to protect and care for one another as Mary and Joseph protected and cared for Jesus.

For more information and Sunday Connection resources visit:

<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/holy-family-of-jesus-mary-and-joseph-a-sunday-connect>

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The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Luke 2: 16-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem
and found Mary and Joseph,
and the infant lying in the manger.
When they saw this,
they made known the message
that had been told them about this child.
All who heard it were amazed
by what had been told them by the shepherds.
And Mary kept all these things,
reflecting on them in her heart.
Then the shepherds returned,
glorifying and praising God
for all they had heard and seen,
just as it had been told to them.

When eight days were completed for his
circumcision,
he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel
before he was conceived in the womb.

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



Mary's Example

Mary, Mother of God, has always been present in the hearts, the piety and above all the pilgrimage of faith of Christians. Our faith journey is the same as hers, and so we feel that she is particularly close to us. As far as faith is concerned, the Mother of God shared our condition. She had to take the same path as ourselves— a path which is sometimes difficult and obscure. In this way Mary becomes a source of hope and true joy! She goes before us and continually strengthens us in faith, in our vocation and in our mission. By her example of humility and openness to God's will she helps us to transmit our faith in a joyful proclamation of the Gospel to all, without reservation.

—Pope Francis

The LORD bless you and keep you!

***The LORD let his face shine upon
you, and be gracious to you!***

***The LORD look upon you kindly and
give you peace!***

Numbers 6: 24-26

Sunday Gospel Connection: January 1, 2020

The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Luke 2: 16-21

Gospel Background: Today's reading is a continuation from the Gospel proclaimed at the Christmas Mass at midnight. In it the shepherds act upon the message they receive from the angel and go to find Jesus in the manger in Bethlehem. In their visit to the manger, the shepherds find things just as the angel had said. The shepherds' visit, therefore, is a moment of fulfillment, manifestation, and the beginning of the salvation we receive through Christ.



In the context of today's Solemnity, this reading also helps us focus on Mary as the Mother of God. The reading tells us at least three things about Mary as a mother. First, Mary is described as a reflective person, keeping the reports of the shepherds in her heart. Second, we are reminded of how obedient Mary was to God when she named the baby *Jesus* as the angel Gabriel had directed. Third, this reading shows Mary and Joseph faithfully observing their Jewish tradition by having Jesus circumcised.

Mary's faithfulness to God is evident in all three of these things. Her reflection upon the events in her life indicates that she was a person of prayer. This prayer made possible her obedience to God and God's will, even if the outcome was not clear. Finally, her faithfulness to a community of faith grounded her relationship with God and enabled her to participate in God's plan of salvation.

Because of Mary's faithfulness to God, she was able to receive the gift of God's Son and accept her role in God's plan for salvation. By doing so, she models for us the path of discipleship and is also called Mother of the Church.

Our call to discipleship also includes these three aspects. First, discipleship means prayer and reflection on the events of our lives that we might see God's presence and work in our lives. Second, discipleship means obedience to God and God's will. Third, discipleship includes fidelity to a community of faith.

Family Connection: In today's Gospel, we learn that Mary honored her commitment to God by naming her child *Jesus*, the name given to him by the angel Gabriel. In Matthew's Gospel, Joseph is told to name the child *Jesus* because he will save the people. The name *Jesus* means "God saves." Even in his name, Jesus announces the mission he came to accomplish.

Your family might use today's feast as an opportunity to talk about names. Reflect together on the name of each member of the family. What does each name mean? Why was each person so named?

Read together today's Gospel, Luke 2:16-21. Recall that the name Jesus means "God saves." Think about how Jesus fulfilled the mission that his name suggests. Pray as a family that each family member will fulfill their mission to be faithful followers of Jesus, in whom we find our salvation. Pray for Mary's help by praying together the Hail Mary or singing together, "Sing of Mary, Pure and Lowly."

For more information and Sunday Connection resources visit:

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<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/solemnity-of-blessed-virgin-mary-mother-of-god-grp>

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH



Families

God our Father,
we first encounter you in the love of
our families,
and we give thanks for those who have
loved us.
Yet no earthly family is perfect.
All need your grace.
We pray especially for struggling families:

for single-parent households,
for absent parents and their children,
for grandparents raising grandchildren,
for foster parents and for orphans,
and for those with no one left to care for them.
Bring us into your one eternal family,
a family filled with your peace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 29, 2019

Perfecting our Bonds



Today's Readings: Sirach 3:2–6, 12–14; Psalm 128:1–2, 3, 4–5; Colossians 3:12–21 or 3:12–17; Matthew 2:13–15, 19–23. Today we reflect on the many meanings of *family*. Our first reading elaborates on the Fourth Commandment: “Honor your father and mother.” In cultures that prize youthfulness and autonomy, the aged seem like burdens or even reminders of our mortality. This passage enjoins us to respect and treasure our parents and elders. Acting otherwise offends our heavenly Father.

Joseph and Mary modeled the holiness God wanted for his people. Jesus’ parents could not have guided their son in holiness had they themselves not been open to God’s love and guidance. Today we hear especially how Joseph modeled parental love. When his family was in danger, he fled to

a foreign land in order to protect them. By protecting Mary and Jesus, Joseph ultimately protected the much larger family of God.

During his ministry, Jesus formed a new family. This family is open to everyone and is based not on one’s ancestry but on love and faith in Jesus. St. Paul describes the behavior of those who belong to this family in words that are inspiring and heart-warming. Members of God’s family are people of peace and gratitude who treat one another with the same love God has shown them.

Our treatment of both biological and spiritual family members may fall short of the behavior commanded in these readings. We ask one another for forgiveness as we call upon God to strengthen our family bonds.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 30 The Era of Salvation

Anna tells how a new era of salvation has begun with Jesus. The old world with its deadly vices like anger and pride is passing away. Those who follow Jesus and his life of love become part of God's new world, a world of justice, peace, and mutual love. Today thank someone who has been like Anna to you, teaching you to give thanks to God and to do his will so as to become part of his new world. *Today's Readings: 1 John 2:12–17; Psalm 96:7–8a, 8b–9, 10; Luke 2:36–40.*

Tuesday, December 31 For the World

St. John sometimes uses the term *the world* simply to refer to everyone, but at other times *the world* refers to evil, to hostile elements, and to people who oppose God and his Son. God offers the light of his salvation for all the world, but some people prefer to remain in darkness. Such people might even have been baptized and anointed with the Spirit, professing their belief that Jesus was sent by God to save the world, only to turn away from the truth later. Talk with or pray for someone who has left the Catholic Church. *Today's Readings: 1 John 2:18–21; Psalm 96:1–2, 11–12, 13; John 1:1–18.*

Wednesday, January 1 Mary, the Holy Mother of God

The use of the title Mother of God emerged in the early centuries of the Church during debates about the nature of Jesus. Some theologians claimed that only the human Jesus took flesh in Mary's womb. Others rightly insisted that Jesus wasn't sometimes fully human and at other times fully divine: he was fully divine even while in his mother's womb. Mary is thus the bearer of divinity, the Mother of God. Honor her by praying the Rosary today. *Today's Readings: Numbers 6:22–27; Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, 8 (2a); Galatians 4:4–7; Luke 2:16–21.*

Thursday, January 2 St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen

The Gospel of John reads like a great courtroom drama in which Jesus is on trial, witnesses are called, and we must ask ourselves who we believe Jesus is. John the Baptist is the first witness to take the stand. John's true testimony about Jesus, the Son, unites him to the Father. Several centuries later Sts. Basil and Gregory also strove to speak truly about who Jesus was at a time when people denied Jesus' full divinity. Take some time today to reflect first on Jesus' divinity and then on his humanity. *Today's Readings: 1 John 2:22–28; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4; John 1:19–28.*

Friday, January 3 Lamb of God

John the Baptist continues his testimony, declaring that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Jesus is the Passover lamb who saves people from death, the food of fellowship between God and his people, a lamb sacrificed for our sins, and the triumphant Lamb who now reigns in heaven. He purifies all who believe in him, all who strive to turn away from sin and toward God's love. Write a prayer or draw a picture that honors Jesus, the Lamb of God. *Today's Readings: 1 John 2:29–3:6; Psalm 98:1, 3cd–4, 5–6; John 1:29–34.*

Saturday, January 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Today we celebrate the life of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, who founded the first Catholic school. The First Reading assures us that although we each sin, we are forgiven by God, who dwells with his Church, keeping it pure. When John the Baptist urges his disciples to follow Jesus, the process of forming this purified community begins. The two disciples, soon joined by Peter, stay with Jesus. They will remain with him forever. Imagine that you go to stay with Jesus, too. What do you talk about with him for the rest of that day? *Today's Readings: 1 John 3:7–10; Psalm 98:1, 7–8, 9; John 1:35–42.*

