

December 30, 2018

The Holy Family

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

God Helps Joseph Protect Jesus and Mary

Today's Readings

Sirach 3:2–6
Psalm 128:1–2, 3, 4–5
Colossians 3:12–17
Matthew 2:13–15, 19–23

Preparation

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



Prepare with Prayer

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your home, Your children like young olive plants around your table. Just so will the man be blessed who fears the LORD. (Psalm 128: 3–4)

Scripture Background

Sirach's promise of long life to those who honor their parents, made sometime around 180 BC, reiterates an older promise found in Exodus 20:12. And even modern science seems to agree with this ancient assertion. As recently as July 28, 2010, Katherine Harmon has written that "more than 100 years' worth of research shows that having a healthy social life is incredibly important to staying physically healthy." Because many people's first and best social ties are family-centered, the connection seems clear: care for one's parents (and other family members, for that matter) can help prolong and invigorate one's own life.

In today's Second Reading, Paul urges the Christians of first-century Colossae to live lives worthy of their status as children of God. This includes not only honoring God as their Father but also loving one another as brothers and sisters do. Verse 13 probably is based on the line about forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer, while the attitudes endorsed in verse 14 most certainly reflect the influence of the Sermon on the Mount. In today's world, all who are devoted to preserving and protecting family values would do well to study Paul's description of those values.

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a white cloth, place:

- ▶ a Lectionary
- ▶ a battery-operated candle
- ▶ a greeting card or holy card with a picture of the Holy Family
- ▶ a CD and CD player

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

Gathering: "The Holy Family" (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #10)

Gospel Acclamation: "Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

Today's Gospel is about the Holy Family's escape to Egypt when Herod ordered the execution of all of Bethlehem's infant boys. It is commonly assumed that the Holy Family's eventual return to their homeland occurred when Jesus was anywhere between a few months and a few years old. Matthew believed that Jesus grew up in Nazareth because Joseph was instructed not to return to Bethlehem. (Luke had a different explanation, but both evangelists were intent on showing how the life of Christ conformed to certain Old Testament prophecies.)

Children's Connections

Today's liturgy presents a great opportunity to let two stories carry the message of the day. The first story, from Matthew's Gospel, will come alive if you have three teens or adults pantomime Joseph, Mary, and the angel while you slowly read it aloud. Practice ahead of time, deciding which gestures will best represent the words and actions of the story. Also decide which parts of the room will represent Judea, Galilee, and Egypt. Have Joseph and Mary dress in colored sheets, and the angel in a white sheet. To conclude the homily, put this old Chinese folk tale into your own words.

A farmer named Sai once had a bit of bad luck. His only plow horse broke through a fence and ran away. When Sai's neighbors said, "You poor fellow! What bad luck!" the farmer replied, "How do you know it isn't good luck?"

Sure enough, a few days later the horse returned, bringing another one with it. Now Sai owned two horses. When his neighbors congratulated him on his good luck, the farmer replied, "How do you know it isn't bad luck?"

Sure enough, a few days later his son fell and broke a leg while riding the new horse. Now Sai had to do all the farm work by himself. When his neighbors said, "You poor fellow! What bad luck!" the old man replied, "How do you know it isn't good luck?"

Sure enough, a few days later, the Emperor's Army marched into the area, searching for young men to go off to war with them. Of course with his broken leg, the farmer's son couldn't go. And what good luck that was!

More About ...

The Catechism on the Fourth Commandment

- "The fourth commandment opens the second table of the Decalogue"—that is, the seven commandments that pertain to the love of neighbor. Its placement indicates that next in importance to loving God is loving our parents and "all those whom God, for our good, has vested with his authority." (#2197)
- Beyond requiring children to obey their parents, this commandment requires all to respect their elders and ancestors, teachers, employers, and civil leaders and authorities. (#2199)
- Rewards for keeping this commandment come both in this life and in the next, while the consequences of violating it include a loss of peace both within the community and within the heart of the offending individual. (#2200)
- A man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, form a family," which "should be considered the normal reference point by which the different forms of family relationship are to be evaluated." (#2202)
- "The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit." (#2205)

The Children's Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about Joseph's trust in God.

You may distribute the leaflet now, for use during the session, or before the children return to the assembly. If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

Leaflet Activity

This week, children will consider Joseph, Mary, and Jesus as a family unit and the ways that God took care of them. He cares for our families today too.

An angel of God spoke to **J O S E P H** in a dream. Joseph listened. He took his family to **E G Y P T**. Joseph trusted **G O D** completely. Later, an angel of God told Joseph it was safe to return to **I S R A E L**. Joseph took his **F A M I L Y** back home. God spoke to him in another **D R E A M** and told him to settle in Nazareth. Joseph listened. Because of his trust in God, Joseph was able to protect **J E S U S** and **M A R Y**.

Word List

Egypt
Israel
Mary
Jesus
God
Joseph
dream
family



The Liturgy of the Word

Gathering

As the children enter the worship area, play the music selection. When the recording is finished, ask the children to recall some of its words. Point out that the words of the song express the same deep faith in God that Joseph, Mary, and Jesus had. That is why they are called the “Holy Family,” whom we honor in today’s Mass.

Collect

Leader: Invite the children to bow their heads.

Then pray:

Lord, in the Holy Family we see what it means always to keep our faith and trust in you. Lord, have mercy.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: Lord, in the Holy Family we see what it means always to act justly and love tenderly.

Christ, have mercy.

Children: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Lord, in the Holy Family we see what it means to depend on your wisdom and guidance in all things. Lord, have mercy.

Children: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: O God, who chose blessed Joseph to be the husband of your holy mother, Mary, please

watch over our families just as you watched over the Holy Family. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

Leader: Today’s First Reading has some special advice for all children. Listen closely.

Read *Sirach 3:2–6*. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”

Children: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce the response.

Leader: Happy are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Children: Happy are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Leader: Read *Psalm 128:1–2, 3, 4–5*.

Second Reading

Leader: The First Reading told us how God wants us to treat our parents. In today’s Second Reading, we will receive special advice on how to treat all the people we know, especially the members of our own families.

Read *Colossians 3:12–17*. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”

Children: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

Leader: We have been told that God blesses us when we are gentle, kind, and forgiving. In today’s Gospel, we will learn of a special way that God blessed and protected the Holy Family, when Jesus was still a little baby.

The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your Spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.

Leader: Read Matthew 2:13–15, 19–23. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

First, ask questions to check the children’s understanding of the Gospel:

1. The first time the angel spoke to Joseph in a dream, the Holy Family was at home in the land of Judea. What did the angel say? (Hurry to Egypt and stay there until I tell you to leave. Herod wants to kill the baby.)
2. The second time the angel spoke, the Holy Family was in Egypt. What did the angel say? (Take the mother and baby back to Israel.)
3. The third time the angel spoke, the Holy Family was on their way back to Judea. What did the angel say? (Move to the town of Nazareth.)

Next, point out that God changed something bad into something good for the Holy Family. It was bad that Herod wanted to kill Jesus, but good that God saved him through Joseph’s dreams. God wants to change bad things into good things for us, too. But we always must remember that God knows best what is good for us.

Tell the story of the Chinese farmer given in the Children’s Connections section. After finishing it, supply a moral for the story: our lives are in God’s hands, and God makes all things work together for our good.

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand for the Profession of Faith and respond to each faith statement with the words, “I believe in God.” I believe in God the Father, who keeps loving watch over us.

Children: I believe in God.

Leader: I believe in God the Son, who came to Earth to lead us to Heaven.

Children: I believe in God.

Leader: I believe in God the Holy Spirit, who is with us always wherever we go.

Children: I believe in God.



Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: Trusting in God to care for us in all our needs, let us pray. To each petition, please respond, “Keep us safe, O God.”

From evil and sin keep safe, O God, Pope _____ and all leaders of the Church. Let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Keep us safe, O God.

Leader: From war and injustice keep safe, O God, all nations of the earth. Let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Keep us safe, O God.

Leader: From danger and harm keep safe, O God, all our families. Let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Keep us safe, O God.

Leader: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

Let us pray. Loving God, you gave us the Holy Family as an example of how to live together in faith, hope, and love. Please help our families to grow in these virtues. This we ask through Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven’t already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to complete the Family Corner activities as a family.