

Feast of the Holy Family

of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Blessing for a Family or Household

Holy God,
source of all blessings,
you sent your Son to be born into a family
where he was loved and cared for.
Bless and protect our family;
make us strong in faith,
hopeful, and compassionate.
Bless us with understanding
and help us to be good listeners.
Keep us from anger and hasty judgments.
Free us from harsh words and impatience.
Do not let resentments cloud our minds
nor arrogance harden our hearts.
Make us willing to serve and quick to forgive.
Strengthen our commitment to one another,
that by our love, others may know we
are Christians.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



December 28, 2008
Peace in the Home

The Holy Family is held up as a model for all Christian families. They are the perfect family. Such perfection, however, can make it hard for most families to identify with them and easy to romanticize rather than imitate their family life. What does this family have that our family needs? Can our family really be like theirs? As a Jewish family, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus would have sought *shalom bayit*, peace in the home. The Hebrew word *shalom* means peace, health, and wholeness. Our *shalom* comes from God. No matter how flawed we are, our family can be a holy family if we seek peace and live in God's love.

Anyone who has lived in a family knows how difficult this can be. Was it easy for them? Imagine how Joseph

felt when he found out that his fiancé was pregnant, or what it was like giving birth in a stable. What does any parent experience searching for a lost child? Imitating the Holy Family is easier if we identify with them, understanding that their source of holiness is our source as well. The perfect family is not a family of flawless people without problems, but a family who, in the face of life's challenges, seeks the peace of God. On this day, we also remember the Holy Innocents slaughtered by Herod, and we pray for innocent children who are being killed throughout the world. Cultivating peace in our own homes is the first step to world peace.

This Week at Home

Monday, December 29 Enjoy the Season

For the stores, the Christmas season is over, and soon red paper hearts will appear in shop windows. For Christians, however, the season has just begun. It is easier to enjoy Christmas without the rush and bustle of the commercial season. Take time now for some of the more relaxing, stay-at-home Christmas traditions. *Bethlehem* means “house of bread” and Jesus is called the Bread of Life, so it isn’t surprising that baking bread is a Christmas tradition throughout the world. Bake bread today and sing carols as the bread rises.

Tuesday, December 30 Cultivate Gratitude

Christmas is a season of giving and, therefore, a wonderful opportunity to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. Give thanks to God for the people in your life who have graced you with their presence. Thank your spouse for making the meal and your kids for doing the dishes. Thank your priest, choir, and servers after Mass. Thank people who don’t get thanked very often. Make writing thank-you notes a party instead of an obligation. Purchase or make attractive cards, use different colored pens, play Christmas music, serve hot chocolate and cookies. Gratitude is powerful. It is impossible to be unhappy with your life or your family if you are grateful for them.



Wednesday, December 31 New Year’s Eve

As the old year comes to a close, many of us begin to think about how we would like things to be different. Maybe this is the year I’ll lose ten pounds, start working out, clean the basement, or learn a foreign language. This year, think big. Resolve to help Catholic Charities meet its goal of cutting poverty in the United States in half by 2020. Go to www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty/ and select “Act Now.”

Thursday, January 1, 2009 Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God

The documents of the Second Vatican Council describe Mary as the “first flower” of the Church and “a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim People of God” (*Lumen Gentium*, 68). Jesus has given us his own mother, the woman who carried him in her womb, nursed him, taught him to speak, and comforted him by her presence

at the foot of his cross. No one knows better than Jesus how much Mary’s love can help us. Give Mary a place of honor in your home and in your life. Place an icon, picture, or figure of her in a special place. Pray the Rosary as a family once a week or find a Marian prayer to say at bedtime at <http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/marprayer.html>.

Friday, January 2 Saint Basil and Saint Gregory

Today is the memorial of two fourth-century bishops and doctors of the Church, Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory Nazianzen. Both played an important role in helping the Church make clear its understanding of the Trinity, bringing unity to a Church embroiled in conflict. Conflict is often an opportunity to grow in understanding. Pray to these saints for the grace to receive understanding through the conflicts in your life.

Saturday, January 3 The Most Holy Name of Jesus

Jesus received his name (meaning “God saves”) at his *berit milah* eight days after his birth. This *berit* (covenant) joins the child to the covenant community (Genesis 17:9–10). A name expresses our identity within the human family. On this day, the name of Jesus as Savior is revealed. We can call Jesus by many names: Christ, Word, King, Light. The apostles called him Teacher. Each name is a revelation. By what name do we call Jesus? What does this tell us about how Jesus is revealing himself to us in our relationship with him?