

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph



Blessing for a Family or Household

O most gracious God,
you blessed Mary and Joseph with the
strength, courage, and wisdom
to be parents for your Son.
Through them you made your love known
to the infant, Jesus.
They were the first of his teachers
of the faith and of the ways of the world.
Through them you shaped a holy family.

Bless our family.
Give us the grace to show your love
to one another and to the world.
Let all who come to our door
find welcome from their travels,
food for their hunger,
and the joy of good company.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

December 27, 2009

Family Life—Sacrament of God's Love and Care

In the baptismal rite for infants, one of the closing blessings says that the father and mother will be the first teachers of their child in the faith and asks that they be good witnesses to the faith in what they say and do. The Church has long recognized that families have a primary responsibility in teaching children about God and in modeling the Christian life. When Leo XIII introduced the feast in the late nineteenth century, he wanted to remind Catholics that family life was sacred and a gift of God, and he wanted to provide a role model for families to follow.

While we know very little from scripture about Jesus' childhood, the Gospel today (Luke 2:41–52) shows a mother

and a father trying to find the balance between allowing their son to walk the path to which he's called and doing what they feel they must to raise him well. In turn, Jesus shows his devotion to his mission and his obedience to his parents. These commitments cannot always fit together easily, but the family works to respect them all. And Mary ponders everything in her heart, waiting patiently for God to reveal what he has in store for the family and for her son. Today, as families, we pray for the grace to grow together in our love of God. We take inspiration and strength from Jesus' choice to be born into a family—a choice which has made our family life a sacrament of God's love and care.

This Week at Home



Monday, December 28

Feast of the Holy Innocents

In today's Gospel reading (Matthew 2:13-18), Matthew draws a parallel between Jesus and Moses. Herod's order to kill all of the little male children echoes Pharaoh's order to kill the newborn Hebrew boys in Exodus. When Joseph takes Jesus and Mary and flees to Egypt, he saves Jesus' life as surely as Moses' mother saved his when she put him in a basket and floated him down the Nile. For Matthew, Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, and Matthew quotes the prophets Hosea and Jeremiah to show that all that was happening was in keeping with the promise.

Tuesday, December 29

Thomas Becket

Thomas Becket was a twelfth-century archbishop of Canterbury who upheld the authority of the Church against the challenges of King Henry of England. This led to Thomas's martyrdom in 1170. The frustrated king, sick in bed, reportedly said: "Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?" Four knights took the words as royal command. Canterbury Cathedral, where Thomas was murdered and buried, became a holy place of pilgrimage. What holy place could you visit during this season?

Wednesday, December 30

Anna the Prophetess

In today's Gospel reading (Luke 2:36-40), which describes the presentation of Jesus in the temple, the holy family encounters Anna, a prophet, who has spent her days fasting and praying in the temple for many years. As she sees Jesus, she proclaims the Good News of God to all "who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." It is helpful to remember that God does not always work on our timetable. Anna's example of patient waiting is a good one for us to follow.

Thursday, December 31

Saint Sylvester

Pope Sylvester I led the Church in the early fourth century and took part in the debates about the dual nature of Jesus Christ (fully human and fully divine). Today we can reflect on the beginning of the Gospel according to John, which speaks poetically of Christ's divine nature: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

Friday, January 1

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

Most of the few stories about Mary in the Gospel are told in Luke's opening chapters. In today's reading, Luke 2:16-21, we learn that after hearing the shepherds describe how angels had announced to them the birth of the child, "Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. . . ." Pondering was the deep spiritual work of this holy woman of God. Barely 14, Mary gave her assent to God's plan, not knowing where it would take her and with what joy and sorrow she would see the birth of her son and his cruel death. But the Word of God and the words of others helped her grow in understanding, and so she kept them until the glory of her son should be fully revealed.

Saturday, January 2

Saint Basil the Great

and Saint Gregory Nazianzen

Saint Basil, 329-379, was the Bishop of Caesarea (in modern Turkey), a founder of monasticism in his region, an advocate for the poor, and a tireless defender of the faith against heresies of that era. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (325-389) became Basil's friend during their student days. Gregory left many deep and thoughtful writings and he was an effective administrator. As Bishop, he helped to restore the Orthodox faith in Constantinople.



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Keeping the Seasons

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