

## Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph – December 27, 2009 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: 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.

### Psalm: Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

R. (cf. 1) 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.

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

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.

### Second Reading: 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.

### Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.



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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

At the time of the Gospel story Jesus is twelve years old. The family had gone up to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. Passover ordinarily lasted eight days, with the customary celebrations. Many villages were represented in the great procession to Jerusalem. They all watched out for each other's children. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus did fine with the big holy days. Even with the reading of the Haggadah, especially with the Seder and its special foods, songs, and customs. This last was the focal point of the Passover celebration. As expected, Jesus, obedient, stayed with his parents. The savory and pungent odors sought him out, mixed of course with human and animal fragrances, and with the dust of Jerusalem, ancient even then. Soon it was over. Imagine reassembling the caravan and putting everything in order. The procession formed a huge family, so you knew your child would be with friends or relatives when he was not by your side. Aromas of the road now dominated: road dust, camel sniffables, and so on. It was a happy time, recalling festivities, remembering the earliest acts of God on behalf of his people. Then the sun began to hide beneath its horizon and families came together for sleep. "Joseph, I think we should look for Jesus. He is probably talking with his friends as usual." Little did she know. No relative had seen him anywhere. Last sighted the day before. In Jerusalem. Mary's heart broke into pieces. What mother on earth cannot imagine the feeling. Missing child. My child. Gone!

The ache and urgency of their rush back to Jerusalem was far more difficult than the pregnant trip they had made twelve years before to Bethlehem. They scoured the cramped city. Day One, looking everywhere, no sign of him. They sleep an hour or so. Day Two, searching everywhere, asking everyone, following every trail. He was not there. Images of kidnapping, slavery, terrible accidents, and so many more hovered just beneath their consciousness. Day Three, to the temple, this time finally daring in their panic to enter directly into the utterly private rooms where teachers and Rabbis debated minor and major points of scripture. No regular people were allowed there, especially poor travelers. Perfectly at home for these eternal three days, there he sat. The twelve year old, questioning the teachers and answering them. Imagine his parents. "Son, how could you? How could you?" His answer was odd and we are told that Mary pondered it in her heart for years to come. "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" What kind of reply was this, adequate or preposterous? He needed a good spanking if he thought desertion of his parents was perfectly predictable.

Yet, think about it. He did not come to earth in order to be Mary and Joseph's child. Just the opposite. Mary and Joseph came into earthly existence to prepare this boy for his role as the adult son of the Father of all things. Every family is meant to send young people out as grown-ups. Or, to say it better, to go out as mature representatives of who God is, of how God interacts with the world. Jesus was the whole story. When the time comes, let us join him. Let us show that God has top priority in our lives.

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. By uniting each of us to God, God unites all of us to each other. Discuss. Does knowing that God loves someone intensely help you to love that person?
2. Even the holy family had some rough spots, the Gospel tells us. Talk about the lesson for you in all the various kinds of families you are a part?
3. Imagine Mary's and Joseph's unease when they were seeking Jesus for three whole days. And imagine the long-term anxiety his answer gave them. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" How do you think Mary reacted? Have you ever had problems of this nature? How did you handle them?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Father, help us to live as the holy family, united in respect and love. Bring us to the joy and peace of your eternal home. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen