

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Gospel Word
Luke 2:22–40

This is a special feast for all families. The Church points to the importance of family life by focusing on our “first family.” The silence in the New Testament about their life for so many years is a good sign that their life was quite ordinary. And it’s worth asking why did Jesus, Son of God, spend, by far, most of his life in such ordinary circumstances? What is being communicated to us by that fact?

Notice how the Gospel according to Luke emphasizes the presence of the Spirit of God. The scene is the temple in Jerusalem, traditionally known as a setting for the work of God’s Spirit. The Spirit enters Simeon, who has been waiting all his long life for the coming of the Messiah. He addresses “the father and mother” of Jesus and amazes them by the good words he says. The prophetess, Anna, has similar good words to say about Jesus. It’s as if the Spirit is busy inspiring everyone around Jesus, pointing to and confirming his identity and role, and informing his parents, Mary and Joseph, about their son. Interesting, isn’t it?

The closing words of the Gospel suggest to some that Jesus, in his human nature, had to learn about most things, just as we do. “The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). This takes nothing away from him. It affirms, however, the important belief that Jesus was fully human as well as fully divine, a longstanding teaching of the Church. This also suggests that it is through our human life that we live the fullness of our Christian faith. It’s not about “the pie in the sky” but about how we live here on earth. Just like it was in Nazareth.

Living the Word

It really helps when you believe that what you do each day is important. We are invited to visit the home of Mary and Joseph, with their son, and imagine what’s going on each day in the home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph: preparing food, cleaning clothes, working in the carpenter shop, perhaps visiting with neighbors, playing in the neighborhood. People probably passed in and out of the home throughout the day. Nothing exceptional. And that’s the point.

God is present in the most ordinary things we do. Our lives lived in the community of family, friends and the larger world contribute to creation, the preservation and the flow of life and its quality. Nothing spectacular, but still, very important to God. That’s “Nazareth life” and that’s where Jesus chose to live for almost all of his life.

One-line Prayer

Emmanuel,
Help us appreciate the importance of the things we do that makes us live well in the community of family and friends.
Amen.

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

This is a special feast for all families. The Church points to the importance of family life by focusing on our “first family.” The silence in the New Testament about their life for so many years is a good sign that their life was quite ordinary. And it’s worth asking why did Jesus, Son of God, spend by far, most of his life in such ordinary circumstances? What is being communicated to us by that fact?

Perhaps one answer would be to emphasize the importance of our ordinary family life. Our daily effort to live together in good and right relationships makes it better for all family members to grow and flourish as children of God. It’s important to living out God’s plan for everyone. Mary and Joseph lived their lives as ordinary parents. So do thousands of others. Parenting is a vocation from God and as important as any other in the eyes of God.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Luke 2:22–40

Notice how the Gospel according to Luke emphasizes the presence of the Spirit of God. The scene is the temple in Jerusalem, traditionally known as a setting for the work of God’s Spirit. The Spirit enters Simeon, who has been waiting all his long life for the coming of the Messiah. He addresses “the father and mother” of Jesus and amazes them by the good words he says. The prophetess, Anna, has similar good words to say about Jesus. It’s as if the Spirit is busy inspiring everyone around Jesus, pointing to and confirming his identity and role and informing his parents, Mary and Joseph, about their son. Interesting, isn’t it?

The closing words of the Gospel suggest that Jesus, in his human nature, had to learn about most things, just as we do. “The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). This takes nothing away from him. It affirms, however, the important belief that Jesus was fully human as well as fully divine, a longstanding teaching of the Church. This also suggests that it is through our human life that we live the fullness of our Christian faith. It’s not about “the pie in the sky” but about how we live here on earth. Just like it was in Nazareth.

Parent Survival

It really helps when you believe that what you do each day is important. We are invited to visit the home of Mary and Joseph, with their son, and imagine what's going on each day: preparing food, cleaning clothes, working in the carpenter shop, perhaps visiting with neighbors. Nothing exceptional. And that's the point.

God is present in the most ordinary things we do. And that's because it's all in the service of life. Our lives lived within the family contributes to creation, preserves the flow of life, and faithfully supports life until its very end here on earth. Nothing spectacular, but still, very important to God. That's "Nazareth life" and that's where Jesus chose to live for almost all of his life. Think about it.

Car or Meal Talk

Discuss what each person values most about life in your family. And then discuss how this might be important to God.

One-Line Prayer

Emmanuel,
Help us appreciate the importance of the things we do that will make us a good family.
Amen.