

Holy Family of Jesus Mary and Joseph

† Sunday 26 December 2021



Cycle of Prayer: Openness to the word of God

Keynote: The holy family of God

The Book of Sirach [Ecclesiasticus] 3: 2-6, 12-14*

True religion, that is, fear of the Lord, with all it implies, also brings with it responsibilities for others. First of all to parents and those who have nurtured us and brought us up. So one of the cornerstones of Judaeo-Christian ethics is listed as the Fourth Commandment: *'Honour your father and your mother.'* Here in this reading the author, Ben Sirach, gives us the benefit of Jewish wisdom, *'whoever respects his father will be happy with children of his own... long life comes to him who honours his father. He who sets his mother at ease is showing obedience to the Lord.'* Children are urged not to be the occasion of grief to their parents, but instead they are to *'support them in old age... even if their minds should fail, show sympathy, and in your health and strength do not despise them.'*

Responsorial Psalm 127 (128) – a pilgrim song in praise of God

Letter of Paul to the Colossians 3: 12-21*

The apostle indulges in a common Greek custom of his day, providing in this section of his letter, a list of vices and virtues. He details some of the behaviours and qualities expected of the Christian community, and we can make them our own today. *'You are God's chosen race, his saints,'* writes Paul, *'he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.'* He reminds us, *'The Lord has forgiven you... now you must do the same.'* As so often, Paul compares the Christian community [the Church] with the family. *'Wives'* he says, *'give way to your husbands as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and treat them with gentleness.'* While we might in these days of equality, challenge the tone of Paul's words, but said in the context of his own time they were outspoken and extraordinarily challenging. The apostle's message is relevant enough – it is about sharing, forgiveness, patience, and ultimately about concern for others. A final word for the children and for their parents, *'Children be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. Parents never drive your children to resentment or you will make them feel frustrated.'*

Gospel according to Luke 2: 41-52*

In describing every parent's nightmare at the loss of a child, the evangelist Luke allows this brief insight into the childhood of Jesus, and the visit by the family to Jerusalem. *'On their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing... they went to look for him... (and) when they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem.'* Three days later, they found him in the Temple, *'sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; all those who heard him,'* Luke tells us, *'were astounded at his intelligence and his replies.'* Even elders have much to learn from young heads, so there is value in this passage for young and old alike! But this is only the beginning, for the evangelist concludes: *'Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.'*

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Note * Alternative Readings:

Year [A] Book of Sirach [Ecclesiasticus]: 3: 2-6, 12-14 and Colossians 3:12-21

Year [B] Gen 15: 1-6 and Hebrews 11: 8, 11-12, 17-19 and Luke 2: 22-40

Year [C] 1 Samuel 1: 20-22, 24-28 and 1 John 3:1-22,21-24 and Luke 2: 41-52