

**Holy Family Sunday December 26, 2021 Our
Lady of Perpetual Help**

First Reading: Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

² For the Lord honored the father above the children, and he confirmed the right of the mother over her sons. ³ Whoever honors his father atones for sins, ⁴ and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure. ⁵ Whoever honors his father will be gladdened by his own children, and when he prays, he will be heard. ⁶ Whoever glorifies his father will have long life, and whoever obeys the Lord will refresh his mother; ...¹² O son, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; ¹³ even if he is lacking in understanding, show forbearance; in all your strength do not despise him. ¹⁴ For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, and against your sins it will be credited to you.

Responsorial 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.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

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

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

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.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-21

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, ¹³ forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule

in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. ¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; ⁴³ and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; ⁴⁷ and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." ⁴⁹ And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. ⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with 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 scriptures 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

Tracing one's genealogy, the study of human descent through family lines, is an occasional fad for some and an intense preoccupation for others. The quest to ascertain where we came from and to whom we are related is made more poignant by the isolation people experience, and by the family disintegration we see in our society. It is fun, and can be helpful to understand our family roots, for they can show us not only our lineage but give insight as to why we function as we do. In one sense history is a simple and natural compilation of family relationships. Men and women have become great and/or infamous because of the contributions of their family, or in some cases in reaction to their family. Pope John Paul II taught that, "Since human beings are made 'through love' and 'for love,' and because love is 'the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.' This vocation is the heart of marriage and the heart of the family. Confirmed for Christians in the redemption won by Christ's self-sacrificing love, the demands and obligations of family life are liberating, not confining." * When this love is present it can make the most impoverished home rich, and when it is absent the most opulent home becomes impoverished. Most families love photo albums. When we flip through the picture pages of our children, their mates, and our grandchildren, we enjoy again the various joyful stages of family life. This week's gospel reading is like a page from a family photo album giving us insight into Jesus' family life, where Mary and Joseph, the Holy Family, provided just such a home of love for Jesus. Of course, the Holy Family's home of love didn't just happen by accident, and neither will ours. Before they embraced the marriage bonds, Joseph and Mary embraced God and were devoted followers and servants of his. That is why they were able to survive, even before marriage, the strain on their relationship which was brought about by Mary's untimely pregnancy. But because Mary was following God wholeheartedly, she readily said yes to the Holy Spirit's call. Because Joseph was a just and holy man he not only set about to deal with Mary and this unexplained development in a loving way, but when he recognized that this prophesy was of God, he too wholeheartedly followed God at all cost. Their lives give us insight as to how we can similarly be a holy family. Loving, holy people make loving, holy families. This begins not with the first "I do" of the marriage ceremony, but with previous "I do's" to love and follow God at all cost. As we look at this picture of Mary and Joseph's relationship with Jesus, we see them relating to him in grace and freedom, and with respect and concern. In addition, we see Jesus living in a responsive and submissive relationship fruitfully growing in this environment of love. That is what a holy family is all about. It should be a mini picture of the Church and of our relationship with Christ and with his people. It should be redemptive in nature, a place where forgiveness and reconciliation are commonplace. It should be revelational in manner, where insight into the nature and character of Christ is not only taught verbally but is demonstrated by the behavior of the members, starting with the parents. As Pope John Paul II explains, "Men, for their part are called to live their fatherhood as an icon of the very fatherhood of God." * Our family trees may have a few broken or diseased branches, and perhaps our own family did not begin on the solid foundation of total commitment to God. But don't be discouraged, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit we can begin afresh today to emulate the Holy Family and build our family into a redemptive, revelational environment that is holy to the Lord.

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INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading

1. How are lives affected by the behavior of previous generations according to this passage?

Second Reading

2. Which characteristic listed above do you think is the primary strength, and which is the greatest weakness, of your immediate family?

Gospel Reading

3. How do you think Jesus' parents felt when they discovered that Jesus was missing?
4. What lessons can we apply from this snapshot into the lives of the Holy Family?
5. How could verse 52 be used as a blueprint for a child's development?

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 a final prayer.