

Holy Family B

*Our God has appeared on earth,
and lived among men. (Ba 3:38)*



First Reading

Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6.12-14

The Lord honours the father in his children, and upholds the rights of a mother over her sons. Whoever respects his father is atoning for his sins, he who honours his mother is like someone amassing a fortune. Whoever respects his father will be happy with children of his own, he shall be heard on the day when he prays. Long life comes to him who honours his father, he who sets his mother at ease is showing obedience to the Lord. My son, support your father in his old age, do not grieve him during his life. Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy, do not despise him in your health and strength; for kindness to a father shall not be forgotten but will serve as reparation for your sins.

Second Reading

Colossians 3:12-21

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God: and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, give way to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and treat them with gentleness. 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.

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Meditation

"Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus." We must see all our activities as linked with God's work. In keeping with the Christmas season, we can reflect on God's presence in even the most "secular" places. Parents, children, communities, single persons, young and old should find hope in this presence.

The passages for this Sunday from Sirach and Colossians specify the shape of a happy home for their times. Whether it be in care for an aging parent or in the loving interaction of spouses, the ideals have perennial appeal. The particular historical applications remind us that the ideals need ever-fresh interpretation in our daily lives. While the cultural picture of nagging fathers and submissive wives remind us of a waning era, we are challenged to see what a happy home can be for us. How will our relationships evolve if we do all in the name of Christ Jesus? The gospels for each year open up for us a variety of episodes in Jesus' early life. His happy home, the Holy Family, is far from idyllic. Joseph must take the child and Mary to Egypt. Interpreting God's will, they are able to escape Herod and then settle in Nazareth (year A). Joseph and Mary marvel at the poetic words of an aged man who awaits the consolation of Israel. Even here, Simeon's words show the swords of pain and division in their home. Mary, the first to hear God's Word must encounter the challenges of his life (year B). Jesus' later visit to the temple presages his destiny and the tension this brought (year C).

In their family interaction, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus did all in the name of God. Within our own history, we must do all in the name of this present One.

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Gospel

Luke 2:22-40

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in

sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: "Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel."

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare."

There was a prophetess, also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom, and God's favour was with him.

Meditation

"Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus." We must see all our activities as linked with God's work. In keeping with the Christmas season, we can reflect on God's presence in even the most "secular" places. Parents, children, communities, single persons, young and old should find hope in this presence.

The passages for this Sunday from Sirach and Colossians specify the shape of a happy home for their times. Whether it be in care for an aging parent or in the loving interaction of spouses, the ideals have perennial appeal. The particular historical applications remind us that the ideals need ever-fresh interpretation in our daily lives. While the cultural picture of nagging fathers and submissive wives remind us of a waning era, we are challenged to see what a happy home can be for us. How will our relationships evolve if we do all in the name of Christ Jesus?

The gospels for each year open up for us a variety of episodes in Jesus' early life. His happy home, the Holy Family, is far from idyllic. Joseph must take the child and Mary to Egypt. Interpreting God's will, they are able to escape Herod and then settle in Nazareth (year A). Joseph and Mary marvel at the poetic words of an aged man who awaits the consolation of Israel. Even here, Simeon's words show the swords of pain and division in their home. Mary, the first to hear God's Word must encounter the challenges of his life (year B). Jesus' later visit to the temple presages his destiny and the tension this brought (year C).

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First Reading

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3

Some time later, the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision: Do not be afraid, Abram! I am your shield and shall give you a very great reward. "Lord Yahweh," Abram replied, "what use are your gifts, as I am going on my way childless? Since you have given me no offspring," Abram continued, "a member of my household will be my heir." Then Yahweh's word came to him in reply, "Such a one will not be your heir; no, your heir will be the issue of your own body." Then taking him outside, he said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars if you can. Just so will your descendants be," he told him. Abram put his faith in Yahweh and this was reckoned to him as uprightness.

Yahweh treated Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised her. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

Second Reading

Hebrews 11:8.11-12.17-19

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going.

It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.

It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told: It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on. He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

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