

## Holy Family C

*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. (Col 3:13f)*



### 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.

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was with the caravan, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere. Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, "My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you." "Why were you looking for me?" he replied. "Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?" But they did not understand what he meant. He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.

## 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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## First Reading

*1 Samuel 1:20-22.24-28*

Hannah conceived and, in due course, gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel, "since", she said, "I asked Yahweh for him."

Elkanah, the husband, went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to Yahweh and to fulfil his vow. However, Hannah did not go up, having said to her husband, "Not before the child has been weaned. Then I shall bring him and present him before Yahweh and he will stay there for ever."

When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, as well as a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and took him into the temple of Yahweh at Shiloh; the child was very young.

They sacrificed the bull and led the child to Eli. She said, "If you please, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood beside you here, praying to Yahweh. This is the child for which I was praying, and Yahweh has granted me what I asked of him. Now I make him over to Yahweh for the whole of his life. He is made over to Yahweh." They then worshipped Yahweh there.

## Second Reading

*1 John 3:1-2.21-24*

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is.

My dear people, if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience, we need not be afraid in God's presence, and whatever we ask him, we shall receive, because we keep his commandments and live the kind of life that he wants. His commandments are these: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another as he told us to. Whoever keeps his commandments lives in God and God lives in him. We know that he lives in us by the Spirit that he has given us.

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