

One-page summary: Feast of the Holy Family [C] (Dec 30)

Lk 2:41-52 (L-18)

Central theme: On the last Sunday of the calendar year, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. On this feast day we are offering our own families and all their members on the altar to ask God's blessing on them and to obtain for them the guidance of the Holy Family.

Scripture lessons summarized: The first reading, taken from the First Book of Samuel, describes how Elkanah and Hannah presented their child Samuel in the Temple, consecrated him to the service of the Lord as a perpetual Nazarite and left him in the Temple under the care of Eli, the priest. In today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 128), the psalmist reminds us that happy homes are the fruit of our faithfulness to the Lord. In the second reading, John reminds us that, as children of God the Father, we are members of God's own family, and as such we are expected to obey the greatest commandment of God: "*Love one another,*" so that we may remain united to God in the Holy Spirit. In today's Gospel, Luke concludes his detailed story of Christ's infancy, with the events of Jesus' visit to the Temple in Jerusalem at the age of twelve to become "a son of the Law" and to take up the obligations of the Law. Jesus lingered behind in the Temple, attending the Sanhedrin classes on religious and theological questions as an eager student of Mosaic Law. Finally, when Mary and Joseph had found him in the Temple after three days of anxious search, Jesus explained to them that he was in his Father's House. It was as if Jesus had had a blaze of realization about his Divine Sonship. The Gospel then summarizes the next 18 years of Jesus' life, stating that Jesus grew up at Nazareth like any other young man, obeying his parents, faithfully discharging all his duties to God, to his parents and to the community and "*advancing in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.*"

Life messages: 1) We need to learn lessons from the Holy Family: The Church encourages us to look to the Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph for inspiration, example and encouragement. They were a model family in which both parents worked hard, helped each other,

understood and accepted each other, and took good care of their Child so that He might grow up not only in human knowledge but also as a Child of God. 2) We need to make the family a confessional rather than a courtroom. A senior Judge of the Supreme Court congratulated the bride and groom in a marriage with a pertinent piece of advice: "See that you never convert your family into a courtroom; instead let it be a confessional. If the husband and wife start arguing like attorneys in an attempt to justify their behavior, their family becomes a court of law and nobody wins. On the other hand, if the husband and the wife -- as in a confessional -- are ready to admit their faults and try to correct them, the family becomes a Heavenly one." 3) Parents need to examine their conscience: On the Feast of the only perfect Family that ever lived on this earth, all parents might examine themselves to see how well they are fulfilling the grave responsibility which God has placed on them. As they heard during their marriage ceremony: *"children are a gift from God to you"* for which their parents are accountable before God, as they must, in the end, return these, His children, to Him. Let us pray for the grace of caring for one another in our own families, for each member of the parish family, and for all families of the universal Church. May God bless all our families in the New Year.

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY [C] (Dec 30, 2018)

(1Sm 1:20-22, 24-28; 1Jn 3:1-2, 21-24; Lk 2:41-52)

Anecdote # 1: Grandparents are a treasure: Pope Francis said that as a child, he heard a story of a family with a mother, father, many children and a grandfather. The grandfather, suffering from Parkinson's illness, would drop food on the dining table, and smear it all over his face when he ate. His son considered it disgusting. Hence, one day he bought a small table and set it off to the side of the dining hall so the grandfather could eat, make a mess and not disturb the rest of the family. One day, the Pope said, the grandfather's son came home and found one of his sons playing with a piece of wood. "What are you making?" he asked his son. "A table," the son replies. "Why?" the father asks. "It's for you, Dad, when you get old like grandpa, I am going to give you this table." Ever since that day, the grandpa was given a prominent seat at the dining

table and all the help he needed in eating by his son and daughter-in-law. "This story has done me such good throughout my life," said the Pope, who celebrated his birthday on December 17. "Grandparents are a treasure," he said. "Often old age isn't pretty, right? There is sickness and all that, but the wisdom our grandparents have is something we must welcome as an inheritance." A society or community that does not value, respect and care for its elderly members "doesn't have a future because it has no memory, it's lost its memory," Pope Francis added. (<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2013/11/19/grandparents-are-a-treasure-says-pope-francis/>)

2: Cancer, heart disease and family relationship: A few years ago, a study was undertaken to find the U.S. city with the lowest incidence of cancer and heart disease. The winner was Rosetto, Pennsylvania. Soon experts descended upon the city expecting to see a town populated by non-smokers, people who ate the correct food, took regular exercise and kept close track of their cholesterol. To their great surprise, however, the researchers discovered that none of the above was true. They found instead that the city's good health was tied to the close family bonds that prevailed within the community. This suggests that there is much to be said for a close and loving family relationship. (Robert Duggan & Richard Jajac).

3: Dying of loneliness: In an audience, Pope St. Paul VI told how one day, when he was Archbishop of Milan, he went out on parish visitation. During the course of the visitation he found an old woman living alone. "How are you?" he asked her. "Not bad," she answered. "I have enough food, and I'm not suffering from the cold." "You must be reasonably happy then?" he said. "No, I'm not," she said as she started to cry. "You see, my son and daughter-in-law never come to see me. I'm dying of loneliness." Afterwards he was haunted by the phrase "I'm dying of loneliness." And the Pope concluded: "Food and warmth are not enough in themselves. People need something more. They need our presence, our time, our love. They need to be touched, to be reassured that they are not forgotten." (Flor McCarthy in *New Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies*).

Introduction: On the last Sunday of the calendar year, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. We offer all the members of our own families on the altar for God's blessing. Today's feast reminds us that Jesus chose to live in an ordinary human family in order to reveal God's plan to make all people live as one "holy family" in His Church. The first reading, taken from the First Book of Samuel, describes how Elkanah and Hannah presented their child Samuel in the Temple, consecrated him to the service of the Lord as a perpetual Nazarite and left him in the Temple under the care of Eli the priest. This dedication took place at Shiloh where the ark of the covenant was housed until King David brought it to Jerusalem. The reading instructs us that we are to live as God's children, "*chosen ones, holy and beloved.*" In today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 128), the psalmist reminds us that happy homes are the fruit of our faithfulness to the Lord. In the second reading, John teaches us that, as children of God the Father, we are members of God's own family, and, as such, we are expected to obey the greatest commandment of God, "Love one another," so that we may remain united to God in the Holy Spirit. Today's Gospel (Lk 2:41-52) describes how Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem at the age of twelve to make him "a son of the Law" so that he might take on the obligations of the Mosaic Law. After telling us how the boy Jesus disappeared on the journey home and was only found by his frantic parents three days later in the Temple, today's Gospel explains how the Holy Family of Nazareth lived according to the will of God. They themselves obeyed all the Jewish laws and regulations and brought Jesus up in the same way, so that he grew in wisdom as well as in the favor of God and men. Jesus' obedience to his earthly parents flows directly from His obedience to the will of his Heavenly Father.

Gospel exegesis: The context: Today's Gospel describes the fifth joyful mystery in the Holy Rosary. Only St Luke (2:41-50) reports the event of the child Jesus' disappearing and then being found in the Temple. Jewish boys were made "sons of the Law" by presenting themselves in the Temple of Jerusalem when they become twelve years old. The straight distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem was 60 miles although

the winding roads through the hills in Christ's time made it 87 miles. On pilgrimages to Jerusalem, entire villages joined breaking up into two groups; one of men, the other of women. Children could go with either group. This explains how they could go a day's journey before they discovered, to Mary's and Joseph's shock, that the boy Jesus was missing when the families regrouped to camp. Joseph and Mary, after a frantic search, learned that Jesus was in neither group after the first day of their return journey from Jerusalem to Nazareth. So, they retraced their steps, searching everywhere, their fear mounting as the time passed with no word of him. It turned out that Jesus, attracted to some Jewish rabbis teaching Scriptures to boys in the Temple had joined them in their usual teaching place, in one of the Outer Courts. There, sitting at the feet of the teachers with the other listeners, Jesus joined in the lesson, now and again asking questions and, when asked, responding to them. His wise, well-informed questions and answers attracted the teachers' attention.

Mary's question and Jesus' enigmatic response: "*Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously!*" In these words, Mary questioned Jesus for causing her and Joseph so much agony by remaining in the Temple without informing them, while all his friends from Nazareth went back. Jesus' bewildered response was one of shocked surprise. Instead of making an apology for worrying them, he blurted out his assumption, the reason He hadn't worried about telling them ahead of them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be *in my Father's house?*" or, "... *about My Father's business?*" [The Greek *en tois tou patros mou* can be translated either way.] In either form, however, the question implies both Jesus' awareness of the family's common knowledge of his coming mission, and of his actual Father, God, and a close personal relationship between Jesus and God, his Father. These first words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel explain to his Mother and Foster Father why he had disappeared. They also affirm both His divine Sonship, and His determination to fulfill the will of His Eternal Father. Jesus was telling

them that his earthly life involved an obedience to more than earthly parents. They did not then understand the full implications of what divine Sonship would entail, namely, that in terms of his mission, His relationship to God would necessarily take precedence over his relationship to them. One of a parent's greatest sorrows afflicted Mary: not to understand her own child; this was one of the swords spoken of by Simeon (Luke 2:35). Mary referred to Joseph as Jesus' father, but Jesus used the word *pater* to refer to God, the Creator. Jesus by his bewildered counter-question teaches us that over and above any human authority, even that of our parents, there is the primary duty to do the will of God. At this stage in Jesus life, "doing the will of his Heavenly Father" entailed obedience to Mary and Joseph, and Jesus willingly complied: "*He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.*"

The Navarre Bible Commentary explains that Mary and Joseph realized that his reply contained a deeper meaning which they did not grasp. They grew to understand it as the life of their Child unfolded. Mary's and Joseph's Faith and their reverence towards the boy Jesus led them not to ask any further questions but to reflect on Jesus' words and behavior in this instance, as they had done on other occasions. Without fully understanding Jesus or the events that were unfolding in her family, Mary was willing to believe and trust in the wisdom of God. Jesus lived like any other inhabitant of Nazareth, working at the same trade as Saint Joseph and earning His living by the sweat of His brow. This is the last reference to Saint Joseph in the Gospels and is a beautiful tribute to him: obedient to his guidance, Jesus grew to perfect manhood. Jesus grew in all ways – physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually – for the work that lay ahead of Him. According Bible scholars the infancy narratives of Jesus in Mathew and Luke give us the "*Christological moment.*" It means that by their infancy narratives, both Mathew and Luke have pushed the *moment* of the revelation of Jesus as God's Son back from the baptism (where Mark presents it: "You are My beloved Son", Mark 1:11) to the time of Jesus conception and birth.

Life Messages: 1) We need to learn lessons from the Holy Family: By celebrating the Sunday following Christmas as the Feast of the Holy Family, the Church encourages us to look to the Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph for inspiration, example and encouragement. They were a model family in which both parents worked hard, helped each other, understood and accepted each other, and took good care of their Child so that He might grow up not only in human knowledge but also as a Child of God. Jesus brought holiness to the family of Joseph and Mary as Jesus brings us holiness by embracing us in His family. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives the following advice to the parents: "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well-suited for *education in the virtues*. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery - the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the 'material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.'" The CCC adds: "Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children." (CCC #2223).

2) Marriage: a Sacrament of holiness. The Feast of the Holy Family reminds us that, as the basic unit of the universal Church, each family is called to holiness. In fact, Jesus Christ has instituted two Sacraments in His Church to make society holy – the Sacrament of priesthood and the Sacrament of marriage. Through the Sacrament of priesthood, Jesus sanctifies the priest as well as his parish. Similarly, by the Sacrament of marriage, Jesus sanctifies not only the spouses but also the entire family. The husband and wife attain holiness when they discharge their duties faithfully, trusting in God, and drawing on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit through personal and family prayer, meditative reading of the Bible, and devout participation in Holy Mass. Families become holy when Christ Jesus is present in them. Jesus becomes truly present in the parish Church through the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass. Similarly, Jesus becomes truly present in a family when all the members live in the

Christian spirit of sacrifice. This happens when there is mutual understanding, mutual support and mutual respect. There must be proper care and respect given by children to their parents and grandparents, even after they have grown up and left home.

3) We need to make the family a confessional rather than a courtroom. A senior Judge of the Supreme Court recently congratulated the bride and groom in a marriage with a pertinent piece of advice: "See that you never convert your family into a courtroom; instead let it be a confessional. If the husband and wife start arguing like attorneys in an attempt to justify their behavior, their family becomes a court of law and nobody wins. On the other hand, if the husband and the wife -- as in a confessional -- are ready to admit their faults and try to correct them, the family becomes a Heavenly one." Thus, we can avoid the dangers we watch in dysfunctional families as presented on TV in the shows like *Married with Children*, *The Simpson's*, *Everyone Loves Raymond* and *Malcolm in the Middle*.

4) Let us extend the boundaries of our family: The homeless man or woman today in the streets of big cities, fighting the cold and the snow, is part of our family. The drug addict in a den, or living in fear and aloneness this day, is member of our family. The sick person, dying, alone, dirty and maybe even obnoxious, is a member of our family. The person sitting in the prison cell for whatever reason is also a child of God, and as such, according to St. John, is a member of our family. All these, as well as the cherished intimate members of our family, are "family valuables," and, as such, are worthy of safekeeping and reverence.

5) Parents need to examine their conscience: On the Feast of the only perfect Family that ever lived on this earth, all parents might examine themselves and see how well they are fulfilling the grave responsibility which God has placed on them. As they heard during their marriage ceremony: "children are a gift from God to you." Children serve as the joy of their parents' young years and the help and comfort of their old age, but above and beyond that, they are a gift for which their parents are accountable before God, as they must, in the end, return these, His

children, to Him. Let us pray for the grace of caring for one another in our own families, for each member of the parish family, and for all families of the universal Church. May God bless all our families in the New Year.

Catholic tradition suggests a few practical ways for us to imitate the Holy Family: (<http://karlaschultz.wordpress.com/2010/11/25/how-to-imitate-the-holy-family/>)

1. We need to hang an image of the Holy Family on the wall. The photos we keep in frames are reminders of who we are, where we've come from and the standard we have to live up to. In 1890, Pope Leo XIII urged everyone to keep a picture of the Holy Family in the home. If the image does nothing more, it can serve as an antidote to the dysfunctional family images we get on TV.

2. We need to cultivate silence. This is the quality Pope St. Paul VI found most inspiring in the Holy Family. They lived a hidden life, a quiet life, a life with lots of room for thinking. With TV, radio and the Internet clogging our minds and senses, we leave our families little room for thought or prayer. Our interior dialogue with God gets crowded out by ads and John and Yoko singing "Happy Christmas (War Is Over)" on the oldies channel. We need to do what it takes to bring silence home — move the TV so that it's not the centerpiece of our household; turn it off when no one's watching. This is guaranteed to reduce family stress levels.

4. We need to make our home a haven of charity. One of the most striking descriptions of the Church comes from a third-century Christian: "It's our care of the helpless, our practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents, who say, 'See those Christians, how they love one another.'" Such charity has to begin at home. The home is the "domestic Church." Yet how many of us Catholics decry the lack of reverence in our parish Church, then go home to desecrate our domestic churches by harsh words toward our kids or our spouse, or by gossip about the neighbors, co-workers or even priests? Remember:

“They’ll know we are Christians” — not just by the Nativity scene in our front yard — but by the love in our hearts, expressed in our homes.

5. We need to make our home a place of prayer. Our day needn't be dominated by devotions, but we should have some regular, routine family prayers, just as the Holy Family did. They prayed and studied the Scriptures, but still managed to get their work done. There are many ways we can pray as a family, and we should seek the ways that work best for our tribe. We can pray together at the beginning of the day, or at the end. We should, at least, be saying grace at every meal. We can pray the Rosary together, begin a weekly family Bible study, go to a weekday Mass. It might be advisable to begin with something small and manageable and then give ourselves time to grow into it before tackling something bigger.

JOKE OF THE WEEK

1: Long Training: A mother goes to her pastor and explains that her son seems very interested in becoming a priest. She would like to know what this would require. So the priest begins to explain: "If he wants to become a diocesan priest, he'll have to study for eight years. If he wants to become a Franciscan, he'll have to study for ten years. If he wants to become a Jesuit, he'll have to study for fourteen years." [*This joke originated back when young men entered seminaries right after high school.*] The mother listens carefully, and as the priest concludes, her eyes brighten. "Sign him up for that last one, Father -- he's a little slow!"

2) Encounter with an angry, Karate black-belt wife: A man left work on Friday afternoon, but instead of going home, he went partying with the boys and didn't return till Sunday night. His wife was furious, and after a lengthy tirade finally said, "How would you like it, if you didn't see me for two or three days?" "I'd like it just fine!" he slurred. And that's what happened. All day Monday, he didn't see her even once. Tuesday and Wednesday passed without his seeing her. Finally, on Thursday afternoon, he caught just a glimpse of her as the swelling of his eyes started to go down.

3) Shrewd girl: One day, a little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast on her head. She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, "Why are some of your hairs white, mom?" Her mother replied, "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me unhappy, one of my hairs turns white." The little girl thought for a while, and said, "Momma, how come that grandma's head is full of white hair?"

4) Who can ever forget Winston Churchill's immortal words: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills." It sounds exactly like our family vacation. (Robert Orben).

5) "Nobody's said hello yet." A woman was at home doing some cleaning when the telephone rang. In going to answer it, she tripped on a scatter rug and, grabbing for something to hold onto, seized the telephone table. It fell over with a crash, jarring receiver off the hook. As it fell, it hit the family dog, who leaped up, howling and barking. The woman's three-year-old son, startled by this noise, broke into loud screams. The woman mumbled some colorful words. She finally managed to pick up the receiver and lift it to her ear, just in time to hear her husband's voice on the other end say, "Nobody's said hello yet, but I'm positive I have the right number." (James Dent, Charleston, W.Va., *Gazette*).

6) Rent-a-family: It started with Rent-A-Wife, a small Petaluma, California, company created by Karen Donovan to help clients decorate their homes, balance checkbooks, run errands, etc. Donovan, who launched her business through a small ad in the local newspaper, is already thinking big after four months of operation. She wants to hire her father to initiate Rent-A-Husband and her two teens to start Rent-A-Family. "We can do what any family does," the newfangled entrepreneur joked. "We can come over and eat all the food, turn on all the lights, put handprints on the walls, take showers and leave the towels on the floor. When clients are finished with Rent-A-Family, they'll have to call Rent-A-Wife. (*Campus Life*, October 1980).

7) Sue your parents! In 1978, Thomas Hansen of Boulder Colorado, sued his parents for \$350,000 on grounds of "malpractice of parenting." Mom and Dad had botched his upbringing so badly, he charged in his suit, that he would need years of costly psychiatric treatment.