

# Sunday, December 29, 2019

## The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (Feast)

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

2nd Reading Colossians 3:12-21

Responsorial: Psalm 128:1-5

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

### *Advent, A Time to Receive Forgiveness and Give It to Others*

*As the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. (Colossians 3:13)*

If you could name just one quality that makes a family holy, what would it be? You might say love, or any of the other virtues that St. Paul lists in today's second reading. And you may well be right. But what do you think keeps a family holy? What keeps them together for the long haul? Forgiveness.

Why? Because we are all fallen human beings. Even though we have Jesus living in us, we still commit sins. We are bound to hurt each other at times, even when we don't intend to. That's why forgiveness in a family is so important.

You might think that the only family that never needed to forgive one another was the Holy Family. After all, Mary was born without original sin, Joseph is a saint, and Jesus is the Son of God! But even without actually sinning against one another, there were still plenty of times when mercy and forbearance were necessary. Maybe Mary forgot to let the bread rise one morning, so they had to go without it that day. Perhaps the boy Jesus accidentally broke the water pitcher. Or maybe Joseph felt hurt because he misunderstood something Mary had said to him. Each of these "innocent" events could have led to resentment if it wasn't dealt with right away.

The ability to forgive one another, even for the minor offenses that happen in daily life together, is the oil that makes family relationships run well. Saying "I'm sorry; will you forgive me?" and "I forgive you" should roll off our tongues as readily as the words "I love you." Because without forgiveness, bitterness can grow and love can wither.

So make forgiveness a goal for your family for the coming year. Show your children and grandchildren how to forgive by modeling it yourself. It's not a concession to say you're sorry to another person; it's a grace—one that the Holy Family will give you for the asking!

*"Jesus, give me the humility to ask for forgiveness and the mercy to grant it."*

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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### Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading begins as follows: *God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and preserves himself from them. When he prays, he is heard; he stores up riches who reveres his mother. Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, and, when he prays, is heard. Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother.*
  - How does this reading describe the graces we receive when we “honor,” “revere;” or “obey” our parents? In what ways have you experienced these graces?
  - If your parents are still alive, what steps can you take to demonstrate more honor and respect for them? Are there any areas that you should ask them to forgive you for the times that you fell short of doing this?
  - If your parents are not alive, why is it important, if you haven't done so, to still repent to God for those times when your behavior did not reflect the words of this reading? Why is it important to continue to pray for them?
2. The Responsorial Psalm begins with these words: *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. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; your children like olive plants around your table.*
  - What do the words, “fear the Lord” mean to you? Why is it much more than just being afraid of God?
  - How does the psalmist describe “the fruit” and blessings of fearing the Lord?
  - What are some of the fruits and blessings you have received from fearing the Lord?
3. The Second Reading opens with these words: *Brothers and sisters: Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection.* It ends with these words: *And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*
  - St. Paul describes the characteristics of a profoundly Christian life. Why do you think he ends this description with these words: *And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection?*
  - How can you foster these characteristics in a greater way in your own life, in your family life, in your relationships with others, and in your parish?
  - Why do you think St. Paul also stresses the importance of doing *everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him?*
4. The Gospel reading begins with these words: *When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.* It continues with these words: *When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead. "He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.*
  - In what ways is Joseph the model of a man of obedience in this reading, as well as last week's Gospel reading?
  - What are the “anxieties” in your own life that can keep you from being more obedient to God's plan?
  - What are some steps you can take during your busy days to overcome anxieties and temptations, so that you can be more in tune with the Lord's will, and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you and guide you?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the second reading and this verse: *As the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do* (Colossians 3:13). It closes with these words: “Saying ‘I'm sorry; will you forgive me?’ and ‘I forgive you’ should roll off our tongues as readily as the words ‘I love you.’ Because without forgiveness, bitterness can grow and love can wither. So make forgiveness a goal for your family for the coming year. Show your children and grandchildren how to forgive by modeling it yourself. It's not a concession to say you're sorry to another person; it's a grace—one that the Holy Family will give you for the asking!”
  - How can you “make forgiveness a goal for your family for the coming year”, as well as “modeling it yourself”?
  - What do you hope will be the fruits of doing so?

**Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to ask for forgiveness and the grace to give it to others. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.**

***“Jesus, give me the humility to ask for forgiveness and the mercy to grant it.”***

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization ([www.christlife.org](http://www.christlife.org)), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal ([www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry.]