

## The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

### Reading 1

[Sir 3:2-6, 12-14](#)

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.

My son, take care of your father when he is old;  
grieve him not as long as he lives.  
Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him;  
revile him not all the days of his life;  
kindness to a father will not be forgotten,  
firmly planted against the debt of your sins  
—a house raised in justice to you.

**Duties Toward Parents (3:1-16).** Fidelity to Yahweh implies many particular virtues, and among them Sirach gives precedence to duties toward parents. In halakic fashion, he comments on the commandment of Ex 20:12 and goes beyond it by promising (3) atonement for sin. No excuse dispenses from this law; he who violates it is like a blasphemer. **1. live:** The traditional reward—a long and prosperous life.**3. atones for sins:** Cf. 35:1.**5-6.** The traditional blessings, which seem to flow almost according to the law of talion, are enumerated.

**17 (D) Humility (3:17-28).** The haughty attitude of unworthy children suggests the virtue of humility to the author. We are told of its nature and advantages and are reminded of the sad plight of one who does not possess it. **17. with humility:** Consciousness of limitations and true position before God as a creature and sinner, but cf. 10:27.**18. greater:** Humility is especially important for those in a higher social stratum.**21. what is committed:** The Law. Hellenism had brought philosophical speculation to Palestine, which often proved disastrous for the faith of a Jew.**25. loves danger:** Dangerous curiosity (cf. 20) about things beyond man's comprehension. Again Sirach has in mind Hellenistic speculation.**28. wise men:** The author includes himself here. Faithful disciples are a joy to the master.

**18 (E) Alms for the Poor (3:29-4:10).** If kindness toward parents constitutes a sin offering, so does kindness toward the poor and afflicted. We have here a short discourse on kindness to the traditional downtrodden of the OT—the poor, the orphan, and the widow (cf. Dt 24:14-18). **4:1.** *rob not:* The rich have an obligation to take care of the poor. **7.** One who practices the Law will be praised by the elders in the community. Some, however, would see here an allusion to the many rich who had lost their fortunes in the political upheavals of the time. The assembly would then be the assembly of the poor, and a ruler, a former rich noble.

**19 (F) The Rewards of Wisdom (4:11-19).** Up to this point the author has analyzed the virtue of fidelity to God in its basic aspects of attitude toward God, parents, self, and the downtrodden. Before taking up miscellaneous wisdom topics, he shows the fruits of wisdom in an effort to entice his reader to accept his principles. **11.** *Wisdom:* Personified as a mother who “instructs her children” in the ways of life. **15.** *nations:* Traditionally wisdom is associated with rulers (Prv 8:15), and here the sage will enjoy the dignity of a judge and prince over nations. But this interpretation does not seem to fit the context. Perhaps read with Hebr *’e□met*, “in truth,” “correctly.” Wisdom enables man to discern correctly between true and false

Or [1Sm 1:20-22, 24-28](#)

In those days Hannah conceived, and at the end of her term bore a son whom she called Samuel, since she had asked the LORD for him. The next time her husband Elkanah was going up with the rest of his household to offer the customary sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vows, Hannah did not go, explaining to her husband, “Once the child is weaned, I will take him to appear before the LORD and to remain there forever; I will offer him as a perpetual nazirite.”

Once Samuel was weaned, Hannah brought him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and presented him at the temple of the LORD in Shiloh. After the boy’s father had sacrificed the young bull, Hannah, his mother, approached Eli and said:

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OT Old Testament

Hebr Hebrew

“Pardon, my lord!  
As you live, my lord,  
I am the woman who stood near you here, praying to the LORD.  
I prayed for this child, and the LORD granted my request.  
Now I, in turn, give him to the LORD;  
as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to the LORD.”

Hannah left Samuel there.

**Hannah’s Petition and Answer (1:9-21). 9-12.** Hannah stands at the entrance to the Temple (“before the Lord”) and articulates her plea, which she fortifies with a vow. Given the Oriental milieu of the narrative, it is not surprising that she should pray not for a child but specifically for a son. Contrary to custom, Hannah prayed silently, moving only her lips, which Eli, the priest sitting before the Temple, construed as a sign of drunkenness. Intoxication was probably not a rare occurrence at such feasts, because drinking was part of the ritual (cf. v. 18; Is 22:13; Am 2:8). Speaking in her own behalf, Hannah expressed herself with moderation and refinement. As in the case of Isaac, Samson, and John the Baptist, Samuel would be vouchsafed by God to a sterile mother. Hannah dedicates the son to the service of the shorn hair. The Hebr text does not show the word “Nazirite” used of Samson in a similar circumstance (Jgs 13:5; 16:17), but it is found in the LXX (cf. De Vaux, *AI* 467). Hannah’s vow is rendered superfluous, it would seem, by the law that compels the dedication to God of every first-born. The force of the vow, however, could be the renunciation of her intention to redeem the child.**19-20.** Clearly, Hannah has not resorted in vain to the Lord of Hosts. The child is called Samuel (lit., “name of God”; more fully, “he over whom the name of God is pronounced”; the name could also mean “the name of God is El”). The connection between the name and the explanation, given in this text as the words of Hannah, is a matter for conjecture. It has been suggested that there is a transfer of traditions here from Saul (lit., “the one who was asked for”) to Samuel. The grounds for this view, however, are not completely convincing. In any case, the name is entirely fitting for one who bears a special mission from God.

**11 (C) Samuel’s Dedication (1:21-28).** The vow spoken often v. 21 as Elkanah’s is taken by some to be in reality Hannah’s (v. 11), which Elkanah took over and made his responsibility; cf. Nm 20:14. Hannah may have refrained from making the pilgrimage on this occasion possibly out of a desire to prolong the time she would keep the child. The practice in the Near East, however, is to nurse a child for a considerably long time—3 years, according to 2 Mc 7:27. Eventually, when the child was weaned, he was brought to the Temple and presented with a very respectable offering.

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Hebr Hebrew

LXX Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT)

AI R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (London and N.Y., 1961)

## Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5](#)

(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.

**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.

**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.

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

**Ps 128.** A wisdom Ps. It is composed of a beatitude formula (which continues in the 2nd pers.) and a blessing (1-4, 5-6). **1.** Fear of the Lord is spelled out by the parallelism, “walk in his ways”; this practical service brings the rewards promised in 2-4, where the ideal picture of family life is depicted—prosperity and a large progeny. The description of the rewards is meant to be an exhortation to fear the Lord.**5-6.** Present a blessing from Yahweh (pronounced by a priest?) that points to the basis of Jewish happiness—“the prosperity of Jerusalem”; the solidarity of the individual with the community lies behind this blessing.

or

[Ps 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10.](#)

(cf. 5a) **Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.**

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!  
My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the LORD.  
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

**Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.**

Happy they who dwell in your house!  
Continually they praise you.

Happy the men whose strength you are!  
Their hearts are set upon the pilgrimage.  
**Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.**  
O LORD of hosts, hear our prayer;  
hearken, O God of Jacob!  
O God, behold our shield,  
and look upon the face of your anointed.

**Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord.**

**Ps 84.** A hymn in praise of the Temple, a song of Zion. It is best understood as the song of a pilgrim approaching and entering Zion or the Temple on a feast such as Tabernacles. Structure: 2-4, the desire for the sanctuary; 5-8, the “beatitudes” of those who dwell there; 9-13, the prayer for the king, and expression of desire to dwell in the sanctuary.<sup>2</sup> For this love of the Temple, cf. Pss 42-43; 48:3-4; etc.<sup>4</sup> The birds nesting, perhaps in the Temple area, become a symbol of the security enjoyed by those who are around the “altars.”<sup>7-8</sup> A description of the pilgrim’s journey. The MT is uncertain; the CCD indicates that even the “arid valley” becomes a “spring,” owing to the “early rain,” i.e., the first rains after the long, dry summer. For the theme of watering the desert, cf. Is 35:6ff.; 41:18ff. *from strength to strength*: Renewing their strength, the people finally arrive at the Temple to “see” God—this bold expression was softened by the Masoretes to mean “to be seen by” or “appear before.”<sup>9-10</sup> The prayer for the king (“anointed”) indicates a pre-exilic date; the king is called “our shield,” as protector of the people, and the channel of divine power and blessings.<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ps 27:4. The comparison of the “wicked” is unexpected, but it can underline the fact that only the faithful, and not the wicked, enjoy God’s nearness (as indicated in 12),<sup>12</sup> Nowhere else in the OT is God explicitly called “sun”. (rendered “battlement” by some); in combination with shield (cf. also 10), it symbolizes God as the bestower of blessings.

## Reading II

[Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17](#)

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;

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MT Masoretic Text (of the Hebrew Bible)

CCD Contraternity of Christian Doctrine translation of the Bible

ff. and the following verses

OT Old Testament

as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.  
And over all these put on love,  
that is, the bond of perfection.  
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,  
the peace into which you were also called in one body.  
And be thankful.  
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,  
as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another,  
singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs  
with gratitude in your hearts to God.  
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.

Wives, be subordinate to your husbands,  
as is proper in the Lord.  
Husbands, love your wives,  
and avoid any bitterness toward them.  
Children, obey your parents in everything,  
for this is pleasing to the Lord.  
Fathers, do not provoke your children,  
so they may not become discouraged.

**12.** *as God's chosen people, holy and beloved:* What follows is a brief description of the Christian community life a member embraces through his baptism. The employment of terms used to describe Israel of old (chosen, holy, beloved) stresses that they are entering the new Israel, a new community of God's people and that their relations to one another should reflect this. *heart of compassion:* These words are first in a list of five virtues emphasizing the inner transformation necessary to become "a new personality," that of Christ. *humility, meekness, patience:* Cf. Eph 4:2.**13.** *forgiving one another...as the Lord has forgiven you:* The petition of the Our Father (Mt 6:12) may be in Paul's mind (cf. Eph 4:32).**14.** *above all these put on charity, which is the bond of perfection:* In v. 12 Paul wrote "put on the new garments of Christ." Agapē is the final garment that covers all the others and binds them together. There may be an influence here from the Sermon on the Mount; "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48), where God's great universal love is the supreme model for man.**15.** *may the arbiter in your midst be the peace of Christ, to whom you have been called in one body:* This is a vivid portrayal of the compact community of brothers in Christ, who is the source of unity, peace, and harmony. For this, they must always be eucharistoi (thankful).**16.** *let the word of Christ dwell in you in all its richness:* The presence of Christ in the community will manifest itself by a wise use of words and song to encourage one another. *teaching and admonishing one another:* This points to a didactic use of music in the community. "One another" is repeated three times in this section (3:9, 13, 16), emphasizing that responsibilities are mutual. *singing in your hearts to God:* Some textual witnesses have "to the Lord." (On early Christian hymns, see D. M. Stanley, *op. cit.*, 173-91).**17.** *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him:* Christians must recognize Jesus as Lord both in word and in action. In words, they will show this recognition best when they call upon him in prayer as Lord. For Paul and the early Church, to

say “those who call upon the name of the Lord” was a way of designating Christians (see comment on Rom 10:13). Christ’s mediatorship is shown by the fact that they give thanks to the Father through him. In deeds, the Christian will recognize him as Lord by personal engagement to him, by conforming his life to the pattern he has left.

**Applications for the Christian Home (3:18-4:1).** Paul’s advice for the most part is commonplace, yet there is a new inner spirit. Everything now must be done “in the Lord” (3:18). Kyrios is repeated seven times in these eight verses. Obedience to the Lord will be shown in life by wholehearted dedication to one’s duties in the family and in the world. The emphasis in this section is on the performance of duties, rather than on rights. This section contains a good example of a Pauline *Haustafel* (→ Pauline Theology, 79:162). **18-19.** Instructions for Husbands and Wives (cf. Eph 5:21-33)<sup>1</sup>

**Living As Children of God (3:1-4:6).** The following verses retrace the steps of the preceding section, developing the same doctrine in somewhat different words and figures. Again there is an exhortation followed by a Christological enunciation.

**(A) Exhortation (3:1-24).** Another fundamental Johannine doctrine, that of the Christian’s sonship with God (cf. Jn 1:12), forms the basis for this exhortation.

(a) LIVING AS CHILDREN OF GOD (3:1-3). **1.** *what great love the Father has given us:* In the truest and most absolute sense, God’s gift of love has been the gift of his only Son as Savior of the world (cf. Jn 3:16). It is this gift that has made it possible “that we be called children of God.” *and we are:* Sonship with God can be considered both an eschatological fulfillment (cf. Rom 5:2; 8:23) and, as it is here, a present reality. *therefore the world...did not know him:* This relation to God is shown in the attitude of the world (see comments on 2:12-17), which accords the same treatment to the disciples that it accorded the Master (cf. Jn 14:22-24; 17:25). **2.** The relation between this realized eschatology and that which is to come is now brought out. The Christian is now the child of God, yet there is a fulfillment toward which he looks, in which his configuration to God will be completed. *we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is:* The second “him” is doubtless God; the formulations of 1 Jn continue to be vague. The image of God manifested to the Christian in this life is seen through a medium, through faith (cf. Col 1:12; Jn 1:17f.; 14:9; Heb 1:3, etc.). The vision of God for which the Christian is destined, however, is much more intimate and immediate (cf. 1 Cor 13:12; 2 Cor 3:18).

Possessing this vision, the Christian will indeed be like Christ, whose relation to God is unique (cf. Jn 6:46; Mt 11:27 par.). **3.** As yet, this vision is a hope, the reality of which is shown in the Christian’s striving for virtue (cf. 2 Cor 7:1). The Christian life of virtue is the earnest of eternal life with God, since by it the Christian already begins to live that life, imitating him who is pure.

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. The Jerome Biblical commentary (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

**Or [1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24](#)**

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.

And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,  
the peace into which you were also called in one body.  
And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,  
as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another,  
singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs  
with gratitude in your hearts to God.

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.

**or**

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us  
that we may be called the children of God.  
And so we are.

The reason the world does not know us  
is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;  
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,  
for we shall see him as he is.

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us,  
we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask,  
because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

And his commandment is this:

we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,

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<sup>2</sup>Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. The Jerome Biblical commentary (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

and love one another just as he commanded us.  
Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them,  
and the way we know that he remains in us

is from the Spirit he gave us.

## **Gospel**

[Lk 2:41-52](#)

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast  
of Passover,  
and when he was twelve years old,  
they went up according to festival custom.  
After they had completed its days, as they were returning,  
the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem,  
but his parents did not know it.  
Thinking that he was in the caravan,  
they journeyed for a day  
and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances,  
but not finding him,  
they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.  
After three days they found him in the temple,  
sitting in the midst of the teachers,  
listening to them and asking them questions,  
and all who heard him were astounded  
at his understanding and his answers.  
When his parents saw him,  
they were astonished,  
and his mother said to him,  
"Son, why have you done this to us?  
Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."  
And he said to them,  
"Why were you looking for me?  
Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"  
But they did not understand what he said to them.  
He went down with them and came to Nazareth,  
and was obedient to them;  
and his mother kept all these things in her heart.  
And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor  
before God and man.

THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE (2:41-52). This sole incident, breaking the Gospel silence of "the hidden years" of Jesus, is narrated in a way sharply different from other, apocryphal gospels.

Mary and Joseph presume Jesus to act as any normal boy would act; the apocryphal gospels multiply all kinds of extravagant miracles. The same penchant for the miraculous or the unusual colors the pages of the boyhood accounts of other ancient heroes: Cyrus, Alexander, Apollonius, or Moses. The closest parallel is Josephus' story of his own boyhood (*Life* 2 § 9), describing his reputation for learning among the chief priests and rulers of Jerusalem. Luke's account, by contrast, is reserved and unassuming.

**41.** *went to Jerusalem every year:* The law prescribed the Jerusalem pilgrimage for three major feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Ex 23:14; Dt 16:16); but custom excused those who lived at a distance from all but the Passover. The rabbis were not in agreement whether or not women and children were required to make the pilgrimage (Str-B 2, 141-42). **42.** *twelve years old:* A year before the age at which a boy officially reached manhood; the event is celebrated today with the ceremony of bar mi□wāh. **43.** *fulfilled the day:* The feast had an octave (22:1). **44.** *in the company:* Entire villages joined in the pilgrimages. **46.** *three days:* Used here with a possible symbolic reference to the three days of Jesus in the tomb (see Lk 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 7, 21, 46; 1 Cor 15:4). *sitting in the midst of the teachers:* In one of the outer halls of the Temple. Jesus is not acting with any braggadocio; he is listening, asking questions, and giving answers to the questions put to him. By implication, however, Jesus is presented as the teacher at the center of a circle. He knows the Torah and its interpretations; in no way is he in opposition to Jewish Law and practice. **49.** *in my father's house:* The Greek can also be translated "about my Father's business." The latter is favored by the Gk construction in such texts as Mt 16:23; Jn 8:29; 9:4; 14:31. The phrase implies a close personal relationship between Jesus and the Father. The addition of the word "house" accords with the immediate situation and is supported by the interpretation of many of the early Fathers; see also Gn 41:51; Est 7:9. This interpretation also fits in with the main thrust of the Lucan Gospel where the climactic moment is reached in the Jerusalem Temple, not only in the Infancy Narrative (2:22), but also at the end (19:45). By way of foreshadowing, the Infancy Narrative ends where the Gospel will. Mary finds Jesus at his work; he is not simply her son, but the heavenly Father's Son, sent on a mission in which she finds him totally involved; at this she sorrows, for it means separation. The words "my Father" are a sharp reversal; up till now Joseph was called by that title. **50.** *they did not understand:* That is, neither Joseph nor Mary. One of a parent's greatest sorrows afflicts Mary of to understand her own child. This statement makes it highly improbable that Mary appreciated the divine sonship of her son at this time. **51.** *was obedient to them:* This last reference to Joseph in the Gospels is a beautiful tribute to him. Obedient to his guidance, Jesus grew to perfect manhood.

**52.** *Jesus advanced in wisdom:* Lk stresses his connatural condition; he grew as any boy would. *in physical stature:* The Gk word could also mean "age," but this idea seems like tautology in this statement of growth. *and in grace:* Lovableness in the sight of God and men,

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Life Josephus, Life

Str-B H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (6 vols.; Munich, 1922-61)

Gk Greek

Gk Greek

including not only spiritual holiness but also graciousness, tact, charm, and attractiveness. Jesus grew in all ways-physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually-for the work that lay ahead of him.

(Burrows, E., *The Gospel of the Infancy* [London, 1940]. Van Israel, B. M. F., “The Finding of Jesus in the Temple: Some Observations on the Original Form of Luke ii. 41-51a,” *Nov T 4* [1960] 161-73. Wilson, R. M., “Some Recent Studies in the Lucan Infancy Narratives,” *SE 1*, 235-53.)