

Feast of The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

The Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (Dec. 29) is normally celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas. This feast began early in the 19th century in Canada and then spread to the entire Church in 1920. It is a Feast that seeks to portray the Holy Family of Nazareth as the "true model of life" from which our families can draw inspiration and know where to find help and comfort. This year it coincides with what is usually the day of the Holy Innocents (Dec.28), the male children recorded slain by King Herod in Matthew's Gospel.

The reading for this year's date is from Matthew (2.13-15, 19-23) and is the flight to Egypt by the Holy Family: *"When they 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."*

The Family of Nazareth traces the journey of many persecuted people and refugees down through history. The experience of the Holy Family reminds us of the many families today who are also on the move in these uncertain times: families forced to leave their homes and their own land in search of peace, serenity and work, but also of those families who live with the apprehension and anxiety of not making ends meet, of unstable marital situations, the fear of illness.

To live the "Gospel of the Family" is not easy today. Those who want to defend life from the moment of conception to its natural end are criticized or attacked. Yet in the Holy Family we find the way to live a beautiful life on the personal and familial level, a way that is certainly challenging, but attractive and all-embracing. To live the "Gospel of the Family" does not exempt us from experiencing difficulties and tensions but the Holy Family can help us rediscover new possibilities of starting over.

Mother Teresa's Prayer for the Family

Heavenly Father, you have given us a model of life in the Holy Family of Nazareth. Help us, O Loving Father, to make our family another Nazareth where love, peace and joy reign.

May it be deeply contemplative, intensely Eucharistic and vibrant with joy.

Help us to stay together in joy and sorrow through family prayer.

Teach us to see Jesus in the members of our family, especially in their distressing disguise.

May the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus make our hearts meek and humble like His, and help us to carry out our family duties in a holy way.

May we love one another as God loves each one of us, more and more each day, and forgive each other's faults as you forgive our sins.

Help us, O Loving Father, to take whatever you give and to give whatever you take, with a big smile.

Help us, O Holy Father, to make our families one heart, full of love, in the Heart of Jesus through Mary.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, cause of our joy, pray for us. St. Joseph, pray for us.
Holy Guardian Angels, be always with us, guide and protect us.
Amen.

Sue Lubowitz
OPC Service Chairperson