

# Commentary on the Gospel: The Holy Family (Year C)

Gospel for the 1st Sunday of Christmas, Solemnity of the Holy Family (Year C), and commentary.

## Gospel (*Lk 2:41-52*)

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the

group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.

And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

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## **Commentary**

Today in the Church we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. How marvelous it is that God has chosen to take on our flesh in a family.

Jesus taught us that God is a family. He is not “like” a family, but rather God is a family in himself. Families in the world are the ones who imitate God’s way of being. God is one and triune. God the Father begets the Son. And the Love between the Father and the Son gives rise to the Holy Spirit. This is the

mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, revealed to us by Christ. Therefore in God there is paternity, filiation, and unconditional love. All the elements of a family.

We have been created in the image and likeness of God. It is no accident that God willed to give us a human nature, and that we are like Him. It is no accident that human beings need a family.

Chesterton said that, when we enter into a family, we enter a wonderful world that we didn't make, an authentic fairy tale where the supreme adventure is to be born. The family is the place where we are loved for the simple fact of forming part of it; it doesn't depend on what we do or produce, or on some specific quality. Parents love their children for the simple fact of being their children. A mother or father does whatever is needed for the

children, who are loved unconditionally.

And if this is true for every family, how much more so it for the Holy Family of Nazareth. Let us meditate for a moment on what Jesus' family is like.

Let us look at the docility of Mary to God's plans. The Holy Spirit asks her to become the Mother of the Messiah. And when God calls her for this mission, she has no hesitation in saying that she is his "handmaid." Pope Francis pointed out in an audience that when Jesus exalts the greatness of his Mother, he does so "not so much because of her role as mother, but because of her obedience to God." Mary always places herself at God's disposal; she is always praying, reflecting on events in her life, and giving glory to God.

Joseph also stands out for his obedience to God's plans. It is

surprising that Joseph doesn't say a word in the Gospel. But he never hesitates to do whatever God asks of him. He has complete trust in God. He doesn't speak, but acts quickly to protect his family when they have to flee to a foreign land, to abandon their own country.

And what about the obedience of Jesus? "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work" (*Jn* 4:34). In the Garden of Olives Jesus prays: "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done" (*Mt* 26:42). Jesus gives us example of surrendering his life for Love, of absolute obedience to God's plans.

The Holy Family of Nazareth represents "a united response to the will of the Father," Pope Francis says. This is one of the key teachings of this Gospel passage: our happiness comes from fulfilling God's will. It

doesn't come from carrying out our own plans, no matter how great they seem. God has much greater plans. He teaches us that by fulfilling those plans we can be completely happy – despite all the difficulties. Every day is a new opportunity to carry out God's plans in our lives.

Today is a good day to pray for our family and for all the families who are undergoing suffering, hardships, or persecution. Let us implore God's protection for them. We will never be without suffering and difficulties in this life. The important thing is to accept God's will for us and for our families. The Holy Family's example of docility will help us to do so.

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