

Feast of the Holy Family

First Reading: [Sir 3:2-6, 12-14](#) or [Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3](#)

Resp Psalm: [Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5](#). Or [Ps 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9](#)

Second Reading: [Col 3:12-21](#) or [3:12-17](#) or [Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19](#)

Gospel Reading: [Lk 2:22-40](#) or [Lk 2:22, 39-40](#)

Readings may be found at: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/123123.cfm>



The Gospels are not historical accounts in our modern sense. They are declarations of Good News, life-changing proclamations. All the Gospels were composed after the death and resurrection of Jesus and were composed to share that message and declare who Jesus was.

Luke is teaching that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise, particularly in the words of Simeon. God has fulfilled the promise to send a savior even though Jesus will not save them politically but rather from sin and death. A second post-resurrection understanding is that Jesus will be "a light for revelation to the Gentiles." This is important for Luke to convey since his audience is primarily composed of Gentiles. The outreach to and inclusion of the Gentiles was unexpected in Israel. It developed after the resurrection through the experiences of the early church.

A third aspect of post-resurrection understanding concerns suffering. Simeon declares that "the child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel" and that Mary will experience a sword piercing her. Christians are not to expect an easy life but one that will include suffering, just as Christ suffered.

In year B of the lectionary cycle, two options are offered for the first and second readings. The Sirach passage offers a reflection on the commandment to honor one's father. Following the commandments was seen in late Judaism as a way to atone for one's sins. While Christian belief sees the full power of redemption in Christ's death and resurrection, this was a step toward understanding redemption while still seeing human effort as the key factor. Our belief holds that our efforts are always incomplete and that only God's action can accomplish redemption. Honoring and respecting one's parents is an honorable path of virtue, particularly as they grow older and their capacity to care for themselves wanes.

The second option for the first reading is from Genesis. Abram complains to God that he and Sarah are childless. God promises Abram, that even though he is old, his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the heavens. The concluding verses describe the fulfillment of God's word with the birth of Isaac. This narrative recalls how God's promise to send a savior was fulfilled in Jesus. While Abram and Sarah were challenged by age, Mary was challenged by being a virgin. God is always faithful to the promises that God makes. Even though there are challenges, nothing is impossible for God.

The first option for the second reading is from Paul's letter to the Colossians. In the verses that precede the reading, there is the call to put off various vices. The reading starts with "Put on" a series of virtues. While initially addressed to those who had newly become Christians who had put off their old practices and lives and put on the new ways of being a disciple, it highlights practices that will strengthen a Christian family.

The second part of the long form of the Colossians reading is a household code derived from the stoic philosophy. These codes sought to establish an order in society so that everyone knew their role for the good of society. It reflects the thinking of the late first-century Christians in Greek society.

The reading from the Letter to the Hebrews reflects on the significance and power of faith. The faith of Abraham was manifest in trust that what God had promised would be fulfilled. He lived in confidence that God's promises could be trusted. In time, Abraham's descendants did become numerous through his one son, Isaac.

Themes

Faith

Trustworthiness of God's word

Suffering in the Christian life

God's love for all people

Reflection Questions

What challenges do you face in trusting God's word and God's love for you?

What challenges do you face when you encounter suffering in the Christian life?

Which of the virtues in the Colossian reading are present in your life? Where do you need to grow?

What challenges do you face in trusting God for salvation versus trying to save yourself?

Prayer Suggestions

For the church: that God will form us into a family of faith that encourages and supports one another in living the Gospel more fully each day

For all married couples: that they may faithfully love each other, help each other to grow in Christ, and give witness to God's faithfulness in their words and deeds

For all parents: that God will help them to encourage their children in the Christian way and accompany them toward maturity and wholeness

For families who are suffering: that God will reunite families that have been separated at the border, help those in refugee camps to support one another, and keep parents in prison in communication with their children

For all who have no families: that those who have been orphaned, alienated, or rejected by their families may experience love, acceptance, and belonging through this Christian community