

December 28, 2025  
Holy Family Sunday  
Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

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. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

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. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean."

### **Background:**

The church celebrates Holy Family Sunday the Sunday after Christmas, a time when many families have come together for the holidays. The typical family of Jesus' day was different from many of our concepts of family in a number of ways. The strongest emotional bond was between the mother and her oldest son. The bond between husband and wife was usually the weakest. The typical family at the time of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus was part of a large extended family. It is likely that Mary and Joseph had relatives in Bethlehem. Because Nazareth was a small hamlet of about 100 persons, it is likely that everyone there was part Jesus' extended family.

Throughout his Gospel, Matthew portrays Jesus as the fulfillment of the Hebrew prophecies regarding the messiah. Matthew quotes Hosea, a prophecy that originally referred to God calling Israel in the Exodus from Egypt. To that end, Matthew describes Jesus as a kind of "second Moses." Matthew's community was familiar with the stories of their ancestors moving to Egypt during a time of world famine. And they were aware of the Egyptian pharaoh becoming fearful of the Hebrews and trying to kill all the male infants. The infant Moses miraculously escaped being killed at birth and was raised by pharaoh's daughter. As an adult, Moses was called by Yahweh to lead the Hebrew people out of Egyptian slavery to a new land and a new relationship. Matthew is making use of these very familiar events to shape his description of Jesus. He wants his community to understand Jesus as the "one God is using" to free them from a new kind of slavery to the law, and that they are being invited into a new eternal relationship.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Can you recall a situation when your family struggled? How did that affect your relationship with each other, and with God?
2. Who in your family helped shape your relationship to God? Who taught you your prayers? Who taught you how to pray? Who taught you the values you try to live by today?
3. What kind of relationship do you think Joseph had with God? How important was Joseph's role in the life and development of Jesus?
4. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus had to flee for their lives into a distant land. Why would God's care for them not make them immune from such threats?
5. Joseph heard God speak to him in dreams. How does God speak to you?
6. How might God use struggle and adversity in your life? How would like to respond?
7. Can you take some time to talk with God about how God has used things like family, adversity, or moving to a totally new location to help shape your relationship with God?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to [annemarie.lom@gmail.com](mailto:annemarie.lom@gmail.com)

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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### **Excerpts from the Readings for December 28, 2025, the Feast of the Holy Family**

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.  
Who 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 fails, 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.

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. The Lord bless you from Zion:  
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

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. 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.

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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.

But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, *He shall be called a Nazorean.*

### **Excerpts from Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Psalm 128:1-5; Colossians 3:12-21; and Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23**

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for December 28th, the Feast of the Holy Family, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from Matthew, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in dreams three more times: once, to tell him to take the infant Jesus and Mary and flee from Herod to Egypt; then to tell him to return to the land of Israel when Herod died, and thirdly to warn him about Herod's son, which caused Joseph to take them to dwell at Nazareth.

The other readings also have references to the influences and authority of a father and mother, and the good that comes of honoring and obeying them. In the first reading from Sirach, "God sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. Whoever honors his father is heard when he prays. Be considerate of him; kindness to a father will not be forgotten." Psalm 128 proclaims, "Blessed are you who walk in the Lord's ways. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; your children like olive plants around your table." In the second reading, Paul writes to the Colossians, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. Put on love, and let the peace of Christ control your hearts. In all wisdom, teach and admonish one another, with gratitude in your hearts to God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, and be thankful."

On this feast of the Holy Family, much of the selected Gospel text is focused on Joseph obeying the angel of God in his dreams, on the reliving of God's people's Old Testament experiences, and on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. We could say these are not the typical experiences of a typical family. And maybe that helps make the point that this family, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, is far enough from typical to instead be called Holy. Their holiness serves as a model for us in our perhaps more typical families, a model for us to aspire to, in our lived experiences of family. Holiness may not be typical, but it can be desired, aspired to, and pursued.

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!