



**Deacon Steve's Reflection on the
Sunday Readings
December 29, 2019 – The Holy Family of
Jesus, Mary and Joseph
Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14 Psalm 128: 1-5
Colossians 3: 12-21 Matthew 2: 13-15, 19-23**

“Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving with one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.” (Colossians 3: 12-13)

The Feast of the Holy Family reminds us of the importance of our own families and Jesus, Mary and Joseph as models of the perfect family, to whose character we should aspire. The words of Saint Paul, in his Letter to the Colossians, offer the blueprint for behavior if one is to emulate their behavior. It is no coincidence that the celebration of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is so closely aligned to Christmas, and is in fact contained within the Octave of Christmas. After all, the Nativity narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are all about the circumstances leading up to the Son of God in the fullness of his divinity, humbling himself to share in our humanity.

What better examples of humanity at its most perfect (aside from Jesus himself) are those of Mary and Joseph! Both could have turned away from God, both could have said no to Jesus; yet in humble obedience, they submitted to God’s Will without hesitation. Neither Mary nor Joseph were persons of wealth or privilege. They were, with respect to their place in society, ordinary people who, like most men and women, sought to live quiet ordinary lives. Yet, in their acceptance of God’s invitation, they became anything but ordinary; instead, their names are recorded in the Sacred Scriptures and they, together with Jesus Christ, are the model of what is often referred to as the domestic Church – the sacred place, where parents become the first and best teachers of the faith.

In today’s reading from the Gospel of Matthew, we hear of the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod. Without hesitation, Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night so that they might be safe. What better example is there for fathers than Saint Joseph, who sacrificed everything to ensure the welfare of his family? The Virgin Mary, the mother of all who profess their faith in Christ Jesus, offered her very womb and bore the Son of God on that blessed Christmas morn. Both cared for Our Lord, nurturing him with unconditional love as he grew to manhood. While the time of Joseph’s death is uncertain, we know that Mary’s devotion to Jesus culminated in her vigil at the foot of the cross.

The Holy Family was bound up in the infinite love of God. As members of our own individual families, we are called to emulate the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. There are times when things are going along fine; however, there are also days when it seems as if we are beset by challenges, difficulties and strife. By turning in prayer to Our Savior and recalling his own place in the Holy Family, let us allow him to enter our hearts so that we might together form the nucleus of faith, by which we are sustained to be disciples in the greater world. As Saint Paul said to the Colossians: *“Let the peace of Christ control your hearts; let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”*