

THE CHILD GREW  
AND BECAME STRONG,  
FILLED WITH WISDOM;  
AND THE FAVOR OF GOD  
WAS UPON HIM.

LUKE 2:40



# THE HOLY FAMILY

OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

DECEMBER 27, 2020

## Feast of Faith

### Processions

Why does the liturgy begin with a procession? It is not just a practical matter of getting the ministers of the liturgy from the sacristy to the sanctuary. The procession is a powerful sign of who we are as Christian people. We are not static, staying in one place. We are going somewhere. Our procession leads us to the altar, sign of Christ's presence in our midst. We move, we process, because we recognize our need for what Christ is preparing for us at that table. We go forward eagerly, because we are hungry for that heavenly food.

This procession is an orderly one: servers, deacon, priest presider. Each is set apart by distinctive vesture: albs for the altar servers, dalmatic for the deacon, chasuble for the priest. The procession is an image of the hierarchical structure of the Church. On a deeper level it is an image of unity in diversity. We are all on a journey to the heavenly city, but each of us is clothed with different gifts. We all receive the call to service, but not in the same way. Only by coming together in all our wonderful variety can we achieve the work of the kingdom.

—Corinna Laughlin, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



## We Are God's Holy Family

The scriptures of Israel are filled with many stories of barren couples who were miraculously granted the gift of children by God. Surely the best known among these is the first reading from today, from which Luke took inspiration when he recounted the miraculous birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah and Elizabeth, and the more miraculous birth of Jesus to Mary and Joseph. In each instance, we are given examples or role models of those who trusted in God. More than examples of those who trust, they are models of self-surrender. They abandoned their own presuppositions and prejudices about the workings of the world and turned their lives over to belief in a God who can make life grow where none ought to; a God who can turn death around into a new and unimagined life; a God who can, today, take a tiny child of humble parents in an insignificant town and make him into a light for all the world. This is what we, as God's holy family, are called to do each day: to trust not in ourselves and the way we think things should be, but to open ourselves and surrender ourselves in faith to a God of endless promise.

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## Readings for the Week

<b>Monday:</b>	1 Jn 1:5 — 2:2; Ps 124:2-5, 7b-8; Mt:13-18
<b>Tuesday:</b>	1 Jn 2:3-11; Ps 96:1-3, 5b-6; Lk 2:22-35
<b>Wednesday:</b>	1 Jn 2:12-17; Ps 96:7-10; Lk 2:36-40
<b>Thursday:</b>	1 Jn 2:18-21; Ps 96:1-2, 11-13; Jn 1:1-18
<b>Friday:</b>	Nm 6:22-27; Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Gal 4:4-7; Lk 2:16-21
<b>Saturday:</b>	1 Jn 2:22-28; Ps 98:1-4; Jn 1:19-28
<b>Sunday:</b>	Is 60:1-6; Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13; Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12

## Saints and Special Observances

<b>Sunday:</b>	The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
<b>Monday:</b>	The Holy Innocents
<b>Tuesday:</b>	Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord; St. Thomas Becket
<b>Wednesday:</b>	Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord
<b>Thursday:</b>	Seventh Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord; St. Sylvester I; New Year's Eve
<b>Friday:</b>	The Octave of the Nativity of the Lord; Mary, the Holy Mother of God; World Day of Prayer for Peace; New Year's Day; First Friday
<b>Saturday:</b>	Ss. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen; First Saturday

## Time

Do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.  
—Benjamin Franklin

## Today's Readings

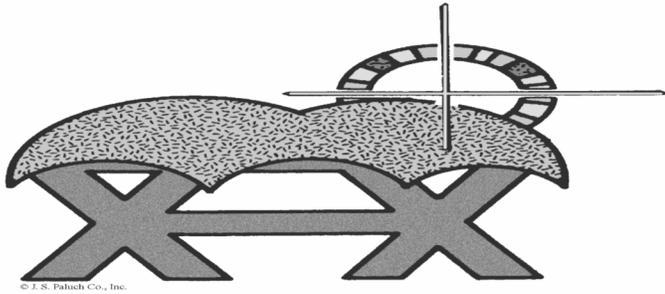
**First Reading** — Those who honor their parents will be greatly blessed and will atone for sins (Sirach 3:2-6,12-14) or Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3.

**Psalms** — Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways (Psalm 128) or Psalm 105.

**Second Reading** — Be thankful; do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:12-21 [12-17]) or Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19.

**Gospel** — The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom (Luke 2:22-40 [22, 39-40]).

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## The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph December 27, 2020

My eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you have prepared  
in the sight of all the peoples.

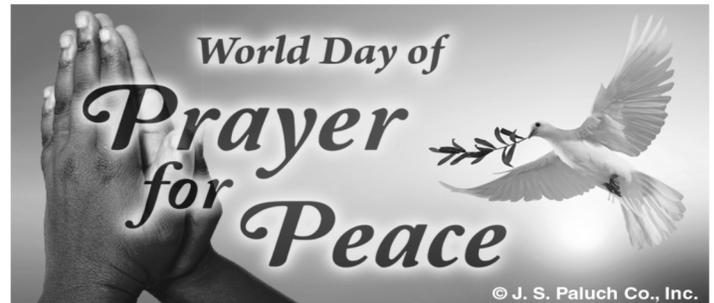
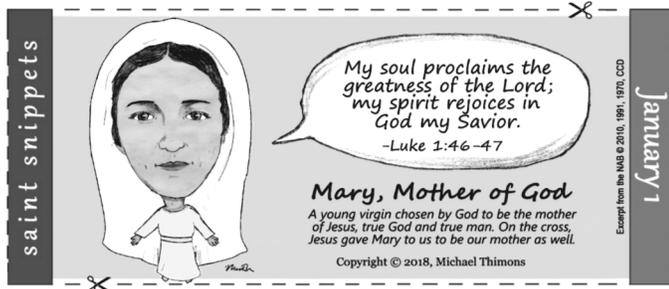
— Luke 2:30-31

### Treasures From Our Tradition

We are in the season of the Incarnation, the mystery of God’s love poured out in Christ’s birth. The word derives from the Latin *carnis* meaning “flesh.” Throughout history, some Christians have distrusted the “flesh,” and stressed a hatred of this world and its pleasures. Perhaps they have not paid enough attention to how “embodied” the sacraments are. One third-century author put it plainly in an image that may alarm diet-conscious Americans, explaining that we wash the body so the soul can be cleansed, that we anoint the body so the soul can be strengthened, and that we eat the body and blood of Christ so that “the soul can fatten on God.”

Catholics “get” that God is revealed in this world. The sacraments use the “stuff” of creation: water and oil; the senses of the body, touch and taste and smell. We use the things of this world rightly. After all, God’s love poured out into human flesh means the world has eternal value. Why else would Jesus describe the kingdom to come as a teeming city or a marriage banquet? Catholics are realists, and nowhere is that more evident than when we gather for a sacrament.

—Rev. James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co



## POWER IN PRESCRIBED RITUALS

Joseph and Mary presented Jesus in the temple at eight days old, as was prescribed by Mosaic law. For many Catholic families, baptismal gowns were handed down through generations, and a baptism was a time of great celebration. Sadly, in our culture, baptisms continue to decline. There are many reasons for this: fewer practicing Catholics, more interfaith marriages, more secular weddings, fewer weddings by clergy, and problems or misunderstandings that turn people away. Many have left the church altogether because of the way they were treated. For some the parish is not a welcoming place. For others baptism has become just a ritual they go through for the sake of the grandparents.

When someone does present a child for baptism, it can become too easy for others to pass judgment because the parents don’t know the rubrics well, or aren’t dressed better, or “why is that single mother having her baby baptized during Mass?” Notice that the Gospel says nothing about the priests of the temple and how they received Jesus. Rather it talks about Simeon and Anna. They are worth a study in themselves. Simeon is a devout man who is there waiting for a particular sign, and it is fulfilled when he see the Christ Child. Anna is just in the temple praying, as is her custom. After the presentation of Jesus, she does what she does best—she goes back to praying in the temple. Perhaps these readings teach us how we as a faith community can see the sacredness in those families presenting their children for baptism, and welcome them as did Anna and Simeon. May we all learn from their wisdom!

Today’s Readings: Gn 15:1–6; 21:1–3; Ps 105:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 8–9; Heb 11:8, 11–12, 17–19;  
Lk 2:22–40 [22, 39–40]

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