



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Feast of the Holy Family

Children's Liturgy of the Word

The Church celebrates the Feast of the Holy Family within the Octave of Christmas,¹ which draws our attention from Christ's birth to the ordinary, hidden life of the Son of God within a human family. The Church places the Holy Family before us not as an idealized or problem-free household, but as a family shaped by faith, obedience, sacrifice, and trust in God amid uncertainty.

We reflect on the Christian vocation of family life, the dignity of parents and children, and the way God works through everyday faithfulness.

The Holy Family demonstrates that holiness develops in daily life—through work, obedience, patience, and love—long before public ministry or visible achievements. Joseph's repeated obedience to God's command models discernment and action rooted in faith, even when the future is uncertain. The Gospel reminds us that God enters history not through power or security, but through vulnerability—sharing in the risks faced by families then and now.

The virtues named by Paul are not only domestic but ecclesial. The Holy Family becomes an icon of the Church itself: gathered around Christ, sustained by love, and shaped by mercy.

The Feast of the Holy Family proclaims that God sanctifies ordinary life. In the quiet faithfulness of Joseph, the trusting heart of Mary, and the vulnerable childhood of Jesus, we see that holiness is not found in perfection, but in love lived faithfully in the midst of real life.

¹ An eight-day celebration of the birth of Jesus, running from December 25 through January 1. The church views each day within the Octave as a little Christmas.

Background

Sirach 3:2–6, 12–14 highlights reverence, gratitude, and care within the family—especially honouring parents. It presents family life as a place where blessing flows from fidelity, respect, and mercy, particularly toward the weak and elderly.

Psalms 128 portrays family life as a gift flowing from the fear of the Lord. Fruitfulness, peace, and joy are shown as the natural outcome of walking in God's ways.

Colossians 3:12–21 Saint Paul describes the interior virtues that sustain family life: compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and above all love. The reading grounds family relationships not in power or control, but in mutual self-giving "in the Lord."

Matthew 2:13–15, 19–23 presents the Holy Family as refugees and exiles, escaping violence to protect the child Jesus. Joseph's attentive obedience to God, Mary's quiet trust, and Jesus' vulnerability highlight that holiness often arises through disruption, displacement, and sacrifice. God's plan is not hindered by fear or power; those who trust and obey Him, even in uncertainty, are safely guided forward. This passage illustrates God's deliverance of Jesus from danger, leading the Holy Family step by step, and emphasizes that salvation comes through trust, obedience, and God's faithful care.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: (in these or similar words)

We gather today to celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, reflecting on Jesus, who was born into a family. Go with your leaders to listen to the readings and learn about ways to live as a family with Jesus.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Lord God, you give us you as we await the birth of your Son, Jesus. Fill us with happiness and peace as we prepare for the birth of Jesus.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

READINGS

Sirach 3.2-6, 12-14

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of Sirach.

The Lord honours a father above his children,
and he confirms a mother's right over her children.

Whoever honours their father atones for sins,
And gains preservation from them;
When they pray, they will be heard.

Whoever respects their mother
is like one who lays up treasure.

The person who honours their father
will have joy in their own children,
and when they pray, they will be heard.

Whoever respects their father will have long life,
and whoever honours their mother obeys the Lord.

My child, help your father in his old age,
and do not grieve him as long as he lives.

Even if his minds fail, be patient with him;
because you have all your faculties,
do not despise him all the days of his life.

For kindness to your father will not be forgotten,
and will be credited to you against your sins—
a house raised in justice for you.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 128.1-2, 3, 4-5

R. Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord

Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,
who walks in his ways.

You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands;
you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you. **R.**

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children will be like olive shoots
around your table. **R.**

Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.
The Lord bless you from Zion.
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life. **R.**

SECOND READING

Colossians 3.12-21

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians.

Brothers and sisters:

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Bear with one another and,
if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other;
just as the Lord has forgiven you,
so you also must forgive.

Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in the one body.
And be thankful.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;
teach and admonish one another in all wisdom;
and with gratitude in your hearts
sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

Children, obey your parents in everything,
for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord.

Fathers, do not provoke your children,
or they may lose heart.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

After the wise men had left,
an angel of the Lord ² appeared to Joseph in a dream ³ and said,
"Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, ⁴
and remain there until I tell you;
for Herod ⁵ is about to search for the child, to destroy him."
Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night,
and went to Egypt,
and remained there until the death of Herod.
This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord
through the prophet,
"Out of Egypt I have called my son."
When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared
in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said,
"Get up, take the child and his mother,
and go to the land of Israel,
for those who were seeking the child's life are dead."
Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother,
and went to the land of Israel.
But when he heard that Archelaus ⁶ He was ruling over Judea
in place of his father Herod, and he was afraid to go there.
And after being warned in a dream,
he went away to the district of Galilee.
There he made his home in a town called Nazareth,
so that what had been spoken through the prophets
might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean." ⁷
The Gospel of the Lord.

² When an angel of the Lord appears, it usually means something important and serious is about to happen.

³ In the Bible, dreams are an important way God talks to people.

⁴ Egypt in the Bible is both a place of safety and a symbol of oppression, both of which shape the identity of Israel.

⁵ King under Roman authority who embodies worldly power that was threatened by God's saving work.

⁶ Son of Herod who ruled in Judea only which made it safe for Joseph to move his family to Nazareth.

⁷ A Nazorean is someone from Nazareth and with respect to Jesus highlights his humble origins and his fulfillment of God's promises.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to hear the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

First Reading

We will now listen to our first reading again, but in a different way.

God gives parents a special job:

to love and care for their children.

When children listen to their parents and
show them respect, God is happy.

When you are kind to your parents, God blesses you.

When you help them, your mistakes can be forgiven.

When you remember their love,
your life grows strong, like a house built on a good foundation.

Sometimes parents grow old, tired, or sick.

God asks children to be patient, to help, and to be gentle.

Even when it is hard, do not forget them.

When you care for your parents with love,
God sees it, God remembers it, and God smiles.

Responsorial Psalm

We will now listen to the Responsorial Psalm again, but in a different way.

R. Blessed are those who love God.

Blessed are the people who love God
and try to walk in God's ways.
They enjoy the good things they do,
and their lives are full of joy. **R.**

Their home is warm and happy.
Their family grows strong,
like a fruitful vine and young olive trees
growing safely around the table. **R.**

This is how God blesses those who love him.
God blesses them with peace,
with goodness each day,
and with joy that can be shared. **R.**

Second Reading

We will now listen to the second reading again, but in a different way.

God loves you very much. You belong to God.

Try to live like this every day:

Be kind — use nice words.

Be gentle — use soft hands.

Be patient — wait your turn.

Love each other — love is the most important thing.

Sometimes people make mistakes. When that happens:

Say “I’m sorry.”

Say “I forgive you.”

Choose love instead of being angry.

Let God help your heart stay peaceful.

Say thank you to God every day.

Pray together. Sing together. Talk about Jesus.

Whatever you do—playing, helping, or resting—
do it with love for Jesus.

Listen to your parents and helpers.

God is happy when you try.

Gospel

We will now listen to a reading from the Gospel again, but in a different way.

One night, God spoke to Joseph in a dream.

God said,

“Wake up. Take Mary and baby Jesus and go to a safe place.”

So Joseph listened right away.

He gently picked up baby Jesus.

Mary went with them.

They travelled far to keep Jesus safe.

It was a long and scary trip,

but God was with them.

After some time, God spoke to Joseph again in a dream and said,

“It is safe now. You can go home.”

So Joseph listened again.

He took Mary and Jesus back.

They went to live in a town called Nazareth.

There, Jesus grew up.

He learned to walk, play, pray, and help.

Jesus grew strong and happy,

surrounded by love and care.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

What did you hear? Allow children to respond.

Sometimes, God asks people to do hard things.

Have you ever had to do something hard?

In today's Gospel, God speaks to Joseph in a dream. God told him to take Mary and baby Jesus and go to a safe place. Joseph did not wait. He did not argue. He listened right away. He wanted to keep Jesus safe.

Have you ever been on a trip?

The trip was long. It was not easy. The Holy Family had to leave their home. They may have felt tired or scared. But they were not alone — God was with them.

Later, God spoke to Joseph again and said it was safe to go home. Once more, Joseph listened. The family moved to a quiet town called Nazareth. There, Jesus grew up surrounded by love.

This story reminds us of something important:

Jesus knows what it is like to be scared or to move to a new place.

He understands families who worry or face changes.

Do you think that you can give Jesus your worries?

When we listen to God and trust Him — just like Joseph and Mary did — God stays close and helps us.

Remember, God takes care of families.

So, here are a few things to know about being part of God's family.

- Listening is a way to love God.
- Even when things change, God does not leave us.
- Jesus understands our fears.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

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The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Let us pray to God our Father, like the Holy Family did, for our families and the whole world. After each prayer, we all say, 'Lord Jesus, bless our families.'

R: Lord Jesus, bless our families.

Assistant:

For the Church family everywhere, that we help each other like brothers and sisters in Jesus. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For all parents and children, that we honour our moms and dads like God asks, so our families are full of joy and blessings. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For families in danger or far away, like Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, who listened to the angel and stayed safe in Egypt. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For children who are lonely or sad, that they feel God's love and have families or friends to care for them. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause] We pray: Come, Lord Jesus. R:

The Leader says:

Heavenly Father, hear these prayers from our young hearts, through Jesus with Mary and Joseph. Amen. We ask this through Jesus. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.



BE A GOOD LISTENER LIKE JOSEPH!

LISTEN TO GOD & YOUR PARENTS.



HONOR YOUR FAMILY. FOLLOW RULES WITH A SMILE!

LET'S PRAY: "Lord, help us listen to you and honor our parents. Guide our family with your love. Amen."

♥ **MERRY CHRISTMAS!** REMEMBER, **JESUS LOVES YOU!** ♥

Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
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