

## FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY &amp; JOSEPH

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus and honor the Holy Family, we remember that God enters the world through ordinary, vulnerable, and imperfect circumstances. For adult children of dysfunctional homes, Christmas can stir complex emotions—longing for connection, fear of old patterns, or a desire for the family we never had. Yet the feast of the Holy Family reminds us that God works powerfully within the fragile places of human life.

The Church gives us Mary and Joseph as models of humility, courage, and trust. Their home was not free from fear or difficulty. They faced uncertainty, danger, and rapid change. Yet they remained open to God's guidance, allowing His plan to unfold within their family.

This Sunday's second reading speaks directly to the kind of transformation adult children long for—emotional healing, spiritual grounding, and renewed identity (Colossians 3:12-17):

*Put on then, 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. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your heart the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful.*

Many adult children did not grow up experiencing these virtues consistently. Childhood instability may have shaped us to become overly responsible, perfectionistic, withdrawn, or hypervigilant. Yet recovery and faith invite us into new patterns. Compassion softens fear, humility frees us from control, gentleness heals harshness, and

patience teaches us to tolerate emotion without shutting down. Forgiveness becomes possible as we release old resentments and grow into new identities as beloved children of God.

The gospel this week gives us Joseph's experience of navigating fear and uncertainty with courage and trust (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... When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream 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.*

Joseph's immediate response reveals a heart attuned to God. Many adult children know what it feels like to carry heavy responsibility, make quick decisions, or protect others at personal cost. But Joseph's obedience is not rooted in anxiety—it is grounded in faith. He listens to God rather than old survival instincts. This is the shift recovery works in us.

Mary's humility offers us another anchor. She does not attempt to control the outcome or avoid vulnerability. Her simple trust—"May it be done to me according to your word"—invites us to release expectations shaped by our past and embrace God's gentle guidance.

Christmas reveals a God who enters dysfunction, instability, and fear, not with condemnation, but with presence. Jesus is born into a family facing danger, displacement, and hardship. Yet grace transforms their home. This reassures adult children that their past does not limit God's ability to heal, restore, and renew.

As we enter a new year, we are invited to clothe ourselves in compassion, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. These are the tools through which God rewrites our story and forms us into people capable of deep connection and spiritual strength.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which virtue in Colossians is God inviting you to cultivate as you heal?
- How do Joseph's actions speak to the fears or pressures you carried growing up?
- What step toward emotional or spiritual progress is God calling you to take in the new year?

## MASS READINGS

**FIRST READING** Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

**SECOND READING** Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

**GOSPEL** Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23