



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Feast of the Holy Family, Year C, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



### Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for the session, read all the readings.

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Colossians 3:12-21 [or 3:12-17]

Luke 2:41-52

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading which appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

### The Word In Liturgy

The Feast of the Holy Family is a modern addition to the universal calendar of the Roman Church (since 1921, when it was placed as the First Sunday after Epiphany). Like many feasts added in modern times, its emphasis tends to be more on a doctrinal theme than some specific action of God. Its contemporary character is also shown by the way it seeks to instruct and inspire through an obvious appeal to sentiment and emotion. The placement of Holy Family Sunday in the Christmas season is an even more recent adjustment to the calendar, stemming from the reform of 1969. Situated so closely to Christmas, today's celebration cannot help but resonate with overtones of the Incarnation. By highlighting the family as the context into which Jesus was born, today's liturgy reinforces the fact of his full humanity. Following a way of thinking common in the early centuries of the Church, we proclaim that the Word made flesh sanctifies everything that he has taken upon himself—our full human nature including, today, the reality of family life. The family, made holy by virtue of Jesus' life with Mary and Joseph, becomes a source of holiness for every Christian.

The Book of Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus) is part of the Wisdom literature, written most likely during the second century (circa 180 B.C.) in Jerusalem by Joshua Ben Sira, a member of the scribal class. Part of a larger section on family life, today's reading is considered by many scholars to be a commentary on the fourth commandment. The author's concern lies with the quality of relationships that must characterize family life. His suggestion that filial piety "will be credited to you against your sins" (v. 14) should be regarded as a way of offering encouragement to the reader to show reverence and care for one's parents, not as a guarantee of divine forgiveness. However, the comment does support the sense of today's celebration that family life can be a source of holiness when lived in accord with God's will.

Today's Gospel reading belongs to the specialized literary form known as "infancy narrative."

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The author's concern is not to supply historical details from Jesus' childhood, but to proclaim to the reader the theological truth of Jesus' identity as Messiah, Son of God and Savior. The reading builds to Jesus' climactic remark that it is his destiny to be in his Father's house (v. 49). Mary is presented as a model for all believers, pondering the meaning of these events—and of Jesus himself—in her heart.

### **Catholic Doctrine**

#### ***The family as the domestic Church.***

On this feast of the Holy Family our attention as a Church inevitably is drawn to the role of the family. The Church teaches that one is initiated into society through family life and the communion of love, moral values, faith and worship that is nurtured there.

Thus The Prayer After Communion for this feast expresses this view of the role of Christian families, "Eternal Father, we want to live as Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in peace with you and one another. May this communion strengthen us to face the trouble of life." (Roman Missal, Feast of the Holy Family).

