

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, December 29, 2024

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than fifteen years.

FULFILLING A RESPONSIBILITY

"In asking for Baptism for your children, you are undertaking the responsibility of raising them in the faith, ...do you understand this responsibility?" This question is addressed to parents at every Baptism.

It is a question that Mary and Joseph could have answered positively when it came to raising their son in the Jewish Faith that was an essential part of their lives.

We see evidence of that in this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 2:41-52), for the Feast of the Holy Family. There we learn that "each year, Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover."

It would be logical to think that Joseph and Mary regularly took Jesus with them on this annual pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. After all, they knew their son had a special place in God's plan of salvation. Mary had been told by the angel Gabriel that her son would "be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). In a dream, Joseph learned that the child to be born would "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

When Jesus was 12 years old, he did not return home with Mary and Joseph after the Passover observance in Jerusalem. Jesus stayed behind at the Temple. Obviously, he must have felt comfortable remaining there since he had visited the Temple many times with his parents. Jesus may have begun to appreciate the Temple not just as a holy place, but as something more. As he asked Mary and Joseph when they later found him in the Temple, "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?"

When Mary and Joseph located Jesus, he was sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. While his surprising knowledge can be attributed to divine inspiration, it could have also been the result of Mary and Joseph passing on their faith, their love of God, and their knowledge of the scriptures to their son.

In the years that followed, Jesus continued to grow in faith as "he advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man." We are told he was obedient to Mary and Joseph. He certainly learned from their example what it meant to be obedient to the will of God. He must have continued to go with Mary and Joseph on their annual pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem and he "went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day" Luke 4:16).

Mary and Joseph did all they could to pass on their faith to Jesus. They introduced him to the synagogue, brought him to the Temple, showed him the importance of fulfilling religious obligations, taught him about God's law, introduced him to scriptures, and showed him what it meant to be obedient to the will of God.

What they did is what Catholic parents should do: They should make every effort to pass on their faith to their children by instructing them about God, taking them to Mass, showing them how to fulfill their religious obligations, teaching them how to pray, introducing them to the Scriptures, and encouraging them to develop as children of God.

By doing these things parents will fulfill their promise to raise their children in the Catholic Faith, and like Mary and Joseph, they will make their family a holy family.

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***Best Wishes for a Joyous Christmas Season!
May You Truly Experience the Peace and Presence of the Lord in 2025.***