



the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

'Now, Master,  
you can let your servant go in peace,  
just as you promised;  
because my eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared for all the nations to see,  
a light to enlighten the pagans  
and the glory of your people Israel.'

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

## Reflection by Greg Sunter

Look at any newspaper, magazine, television current affairs program or social commentary and you will be bombarded with the notion that the institution of family is under attack. Rather, what appears to be under attack is a particular view of what it means to be 'family'. Society in general and governments in particular are recognising the reality that 'family' is a much more fluid term than it used to be. Rather than an attack on family, it might be argued that there is in fact an embracing of the concept of family by making its definition much broader.

In this feast we celebrate the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The model of family that we have in this Holy Family is a model that would not be entirely out of place in the 21st Century. Mary was a very young woman; possibly no more than 13 or 14 years old. Joseph was an older man; possibly on his second marriage. There was a degree of scandal about the conception of their child and Joseph seriously contemplated whether or not he would go ahead with the marriage. They were forced to flee their homeland and seek protection as refugees in Egypt. We see from today's passage that the parents are doing their best to be faithful to their religious and cultural traditions whilst worrying about what the future holds for their son. It is a picture that is not too different from the situation in which many families today find themselves. So while we celebrate today the feast of the Holy Family, it is very much a celebration of every family.

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## The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Year B

31 December 2023

### First Reading Sir 3:2-6. 12-14

*Whoever fears the Lord honours his parents.*

The Lord honours the father in his children, and upholds the rights of a mother over her sons. Whoever respects his father is atoning for his sins, he who honours his mother is like someone amassing a fortune.

Whoever respects his father will be happy with children of his own, he shall be heard on the day when he prays. Long life comes to him who honours his father, he who sets his mother at ease is showing obedience to the Lord.

My son, support your father in his old age, do not grieve him during his life. Even if his mind should fail, show him sympathy, do not despise him in your health and strength; for kindness to a father shall not be forgotten but will serve as reparation for your sins.

### Responsorial Psalm

**Ps 127:1-5. R. see v.1**

*(R.) Happy are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.*

- O blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways!  
By the labour of your hands you shall eat.  
You will be happy and prosper. (R.)
- Your wife like a fruitful vine  
in the heart of your house;  
your children like shoots of the olive,  
around your table. (R.)
- Indeed thus shall be blessed  
the man who fears the Lord.  
May the Lord bless you from Zion  
all the days of your life. (R.)

### Second Reading Col 3:12-21

*Concerning the Christian life in the world.*

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon

as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, give way to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and treat them with gentleness. Children, be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. Parents, never drive your children to resentment or you will make them feel frustrated.

### Gospel Acclamation Col 3:15. 16

*Alleluia, alleluia!*

*May the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,  
and the fullness of his message live  
within you.*

*Alleluia!*

### Gospel Lk 2:22-40

**(or Shorter form Lk 2:22. 39-40)**

*The child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom.*

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by



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PARISH ADMINISTRATOR: Father Tony Percy  
Mobile: 0431 225 574  
Braidwood Contact Numbers: Ph. 430 169 849 (Secretary)  
Parish email: [braidwood@cg.org.au](mailto:braidwood@cg.org.au)  
Parish Website: <http://cg.org.au/braidwood/Home.aspx>



## The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, Year B

31 December 2023

### First Reading Gen 15:1-6. 21:1-3

*Your own son shall be your heir.*

The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision, 'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great'.

'My Lord', Abram replied, 'what do you intend to give me? I go childless...' Then Abram said, 'See, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.' And then this word of the Lord was spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be one of your own flesh and blood.' Then taking him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants,' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified.

The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised her. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

### Responsorial Psalm Ps 104:1-6. 8-9. R.vv.7-8

*(R.) The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.*

1. Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.  
O sing to him, sing his praise;  
tell all his wonderful works! (R.)
2. Be proud of his holy name, let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice.  
Consider the Lord and his strength;  
constantly seek his face. (R.)
3. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, the judgements he spoke.  
O children of Abraham, his servant,  
O sons of the Jacob he chose. (R.)
4. He remembers his covenant for ever, his promise for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. (R.)

### Second Reading Heb 11:8. 11-12. 17-19

*The faith of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac.*

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going.

It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.

It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told: It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on. He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

### Gospel Acclamation Heb 1:1-2

*Alleluia, alleluia!*

*In the past God spoke to our fathers through the prophets;  
now he speaks to us through his Son.  
Alleluia!*

### Gospel Lk 2:22-40

*(or Shorter form Lk 2:22. 39-40)*

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When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until