

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

December - 2015

The following series is **free, downloadable small-group materials** based on each week's Mass readings and taking into account the seasons of the liturgical year. Each study provides an introductory reflection on some aspect of the readings or on personal spirituality. Each of the readings is provided along with a few questions designed to engage the heart and stimulate the group's discussion. These small-group materials will be provided on a continuing basis in monthly segments.

We would suggest the following 60-to-90 minute format for the small group:

1. Open with a moment of quiet reflection and prayer.
2. Discuss the introductory reflection with a question or comment like, "What do you feel is important for us to grasp in this introduction?" or "What stood out to you from these opening paragraphs?" As the facilitator of the discussion be ready to share one or two things which were important to you from the introduction.
3. Have someone read the First Reading and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions. **Effective group-dynamic techniques should be used to further stimulate the discussion and affirm the participation.**
4. The Responsorial Psalm provides a reflective transition from the First Reading to the Gospel Reading, so have the Psalm read aloud. You may do this without additional comment, or you may want to draw their attention to something you feel is pertinent.
5. You can either read this week's Second Reading next and ask several people to share their answers to the reflection questions, or cover the Second Reading after you cover the Gospel Reading. The Second Reading does not always have a clear connection to the other Sunday Mass readings, **so do not feel like you need to force a connection.** However, you can provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to draw a connection by asking, "How do you see this passage tying into the theme of the readings?"
6. Move on to the Gospel Reading, repeating the process by asking several people to share their answers to the reflection questions.
7. Approximately equal time for discussion should be given to each of the sections: Introduction, First Reading, Gospel Reading, and the Second Reading. Obviously, if one section is especially stimulating, you should give some additional time to discussing it.
8. Close the discussion with group prayer, using various prayer formats.

We trust that God will use these materials to make His Word more meaningful to you, both within the small group environment and during Mass as you hear the Scripture is read and taught. **We would appreciate knowing if you are using the *Reflecting on Sunday's Readings*, and would welcome your feedback, either through the Emmaus Journey web page form, or by direct e-mail.**

Sincerely in Christ,

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Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT—December 6, 2015

Introduction: “Pre-evangelism” is a modern ministry term that refers to the biblical process of preparing people to receive the Good News of Jesus and the salvation available through him. In one sense it is very much like the agricultural process of preparing the soil to receive seed so that the seed has the optimal chance of germinating and springing into life. The farmer prepares the soil by plowing, tilling, and adding various soil supplements, depending on the condition of the soil. This process takes time, energy and money, however without proper soil preparation much seed would be wasted and the harvest greatly diminished.

John the Baptist was a herald of Jesus’ arrival on the scene and history of man’s salvation. John’s austere life and straightforward proclamations prepared the way for the appearance of Jesus and the starting of his ministry. John was involved in “pre-evangelism” long before the term was coined, for he conditioned hearts to be receptive to the arrival of the Lamb of God, and Jesus’ work of salvation. Consequently, when Jesus presented himself to John to be baptized, several of John’s disciples were prepared to follow Jesus, ultimately becoming his disciples. Because of John’s preparatory work the seed of Jesus’ words fell on the receptive soil of their hearts, bringing forth both growth and fruit.

We know that Christ has come, that’s what we celebrate during this season of Advent. However, there dwells in our midst many people for whom Jesus’ coming does not exist. Though they may know his name and even use it when cursing, they don’t know who he is, they do not comprehend what he has done for them, and they have never encountered him personally. Many are bruised and battered by life, cynically rejecting the Truth, and steeling themselves against further hurt, they remain unreceptive to the seeds of Truth.

Like the people of John the Baptist’s day people need a herald to awaken their hearts to the Good News. As Pope Paul VI points out “Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live.” (Evangeli Nuntiandi, 21) Like the farmers soil, people need someone who cares enough to gently break up the fallow ground of their hearts by their living witness, so that it can receive the seeds of Truth.

The season of Advent is a prime time to begin this process with people we know. Advent lends itself to being friendly and expanding relationships. Casual conversations about Christmas plans, feelings, and traditions can easily overflow into a gracious and non-threatening sharing with others the real meaning of Christmas for us. Little kindnesses and thoughtful, unexpected acts of grace-filled giving can soften and melt hearts steeled by life’s hurts, communicating love, care and concern. We not only can be, but must be, heralds of Jesus especially during this season of Advent. Who knows? Perhaps God will use us in this season to herald his coming to a friend or family member who will hear him, for the first time.

First Reading — Baruch 5:1-9

1 Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: 2 Wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, bear on your head the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name. 3 For God will show all the earth your splendor: 4 you will be named by God forever the peace of justice, the glory of God’s worship. 5 Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children Gathered from the east and the west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God. 6 Led away on foot by their enemies they left you: but God will bring them back to you borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones. 7 For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, And that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God. 8 The forests and every fragrant kind of tree have overshadowed Israel at God’s command; 9 For God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company.

1. This passage speaks of the joyful return of captive Israelites to Jerusalem and to the community of those who gather around the word of the Holy One. How would you describe to someone who is living in spiritual captivity, the transformation available to them in Christ?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 126:1-6

1 A song of ascents. When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, then we thought we were dreaming. 2 Our mouths were filled with laughter; our tongues sang for joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD had done great things for them." 3 The LORD has done great things for us; Oh, how happy we were! 4 Restore again our fortunes, LORD, like the dry stream beds of the Negeb. 5 Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy. 6 Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed, Will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves

Second Reading — Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

4 praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, 5 because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. 6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. ...

8 For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, 10 to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

2. What part do you think our prayers play in another's spiritual growth?

Gospel Reading — Luke 3:1-6

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. 3 He went throughout (the) whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. 5 Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

3. What do you think John the Baptist was doing in the wilderness? Does his experience have any application for us?

4. Isaiah prophesied of John the Baptist's crying out in the wilderness. What do you think is the wilderness of our society?

5. How would you restate John's message of preparation, and promises, so that people today would understand and respond?

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT—December 13, 2015

Introduction: The question, “What shall we do?” found in this week’s Gospel reading arose from John the Baptist’s exhortation to “bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance.” We must keep in mind that John, as the forerunner of Jesus, prepared people to receive him as Lord and Christ. During Advent we also anticipate the arrival of Jesus, the Christ, hoping that he will be birthed afresh in our hearts and lives, bringing a new awareness of the hope of salvation. Consequently, this passage provides insight as to how we might prepare to receive him.

It is interesting that John relates repentance first with action rather than simply having deep feelings of regret. The Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary supports this position by listing as the first definition of repentance, “to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one’s life.” It is only when we look at the second definition that we encounter feelings of “regret and contrition,” and “change of one’s mind.” Obviously, both aspects of repentance are important, however John’s use of repentance emphasizes action and a change of behavior, and not simply inner feelings which can easily be forgotten once we arise from our knees.

Many might question whether this imperative to change our sinful behavior is really “good news.” Perhaps one would be justified to think this way, had John’s message stopped there, but it didn’t. John also foretold the impending appearance of another messenger from God who was to be more important and powerful than himself, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Now that is good news! The Holy Spirit, who is a gift to us from the Father and the Son, is an integral part of the good news of Jesus’ first advent. The Holy Spirit is the means to the end; release from captivity to sin and to rebirth into a life with God. He is the indwelling power for changing our inclinations, enabling us to break old habits of sin and replace them with new habits of righteousness. This space is too small to even begin to reiterate all the grace and gifts that come with his presence, but suffice it to say that they are manifold. As the Catechism explains: “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Because we are dead or at least wounded through sin the first effect of the gift of love is the forgiveness of our sins. The communion of the Holy Spirit in the Church restores to the baptized the divine likeness lost through sin. He, then, gives us the ‘pledge’ or ‘first fruits’ of our inheritance; the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as ‘God [has] loved us.’ This love... is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received ‘power’ from the Holy Spirit.”

As Christians we too often forget this aspect of the Good News which Jesus brought. He has imparted to us the Holy Spirit. This constant companion and intercessor helps us to experience real incarnational life in Christ. This Third Week of Advent should remind us of this message of hope and gift of enablement. Additionally it should renew us in his love, and prepare us to open our hearts wholly to him.

First Reading — Zephaniah 3:14-18

14 Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! 15 The LORD has removed the judgment against you, he has turned away your enemies; The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear. 16 On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! 17 The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, He will sing joyfully because of you, 18 as one sings at festivals. I will remove disaster from among you, so that none may recount your disgrace.

1. Why should we not fear or be faint hearted?
2. What does the phrase “the Lord is in your midst” convey to you?

Responsorial Reading — Isaiah 12:2-6

2 God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. 3 With joy you will draw water at the fountain of salvation, 4 and say on that day: Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name; among the nations make known his deeds, proclaim how exalted is his name. 5 Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement; let this be known throughout all the earth. 6 Shout with exultation, O city of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel!

Second Reading — Philippians 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!

5 Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. 6 Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. 7 Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

3. How does prayer, supplication and thanksgiving transform our anxieties into peacefulness?

4. How do you think the peace of God is expressed or experienced in one's life?

Gospel Reading — Luke 3:10-18

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."

15 Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fan² is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

18 Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

5. In verses 10-14 John expresses several behavioral changes. What corresponding change in attitude is necessary to sustain these behavioral changes?

6. What do John's statements in verses 15-17 intimate about the nature of Jesus and his ministry?

5. Explain as best you can your understanding of what sacred Scripture and the Church teach about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Reflecting On Sunday's Readings

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT—December 20, 2015

Introduction: Since this Fourth Sunday of Advent falls close to Christmas, quite naturally our minds and energies may be focused on the upcoming Christmas celebrations, family gatherings, and traditional remembrances. We will need to be watchful and observant this week and during Mass to not let our minds wander from the wonder of the miraculous to the minutia of the mundane.

The Incarnation of Christ is so filled with the miraculous that it is difficult for us as we meditate on one aspect of it to not be immediately awed by some corresponding wonder. Certainly we are dazzled by the immediate, profound, and joyful surrender of Mary, the humble handmaiden of God. Her simple trust and willing-ness to say yes to God's will in the face of the societal consequences which faced an unwed mother, should astound any reasonable observer. "But Mary" as Pope Paul VI observed, "is above all the example of that worship that consists in making one's life an offering to God. This is an ancient and ever new doctrine that each individual can hear again by heeding ... the very voice of the Virgin as she, anticipating in herself the wonderful petition of the Lord's Prayer—"Your will be done"—replied to God's messenger: 'I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to me' And Mary's 'yes' is for all Christians a lesson and example of obedience to the will of the Father."

Yet even as we contemplate the wonder of Mary's response our thoughts are eclipsed and dazzled more intensely by the humble submission of the Son to the Father. He who participated as co-creator of the universe and who was perfectly united with the Father, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, willingly surrendered all rights, and humbly embraced a body prepared for him. Though he knew that his body was to be a living sacrifice that once for all would remove the effects of sin and death, yet he in willing cooperation says, "I have come to do Thy will." We stand awed to consider that the Almighty Lord would visit earth in the form of a helpless, totally defenseless and dependent, babe. We are astounded that the Ruler of the Universe would submit to the constraints of so flawed a society of man. We are amazed that he whose appearance is described as "the hair of his head was as white as wool or as snow, and his eyes like a fiery flame, his feet were like polished brass refined in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of rushing water," (Rev. 1:15) would encapsulate his glory in human flesh so that we might know him and know of his love for us. Amazing grace!!

The wonder of Jesus' incarnation is explained by Romano Guardini in the book *The Lord*: "At first a child like any other, it cries, is hungry, sleeps, and yet is 'the Word...become flesh.' It cannot be said that God 'inhabits' this infant, however gloriously; or that heaven has set its seal upon him, so that we must pursue it, suffer for it in a manner sublimely excelling all other contacts between God and man; this child is God in essence and in being ... The young creature in the stall of Bethlehem was a human being with human brain and limbs and heart and soul. And it was God. Its life was to manifest the will of the Father: to proclaim the sacred tidings, to stir mankind with the power of God, to establish the covenant, and shoulder the sin of the world ... and the victory of the Resurrection into the new existence of grace."

It is no wonder that the baby in Elizabeth's womb jumped for joy, or that Elizabeth, full of the Holy Spirit, and tapping into the wisdom of God, should proclaim "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" As we kneel in adoration and expectation on this Fourth Sunday of Advent may God grant us similar insight, allowing our hearts to also "jump with joy."

First Reading — Micah 5:1-4

1 But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, From you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. 2 (Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne, And the rest of his brethren shall return to the children of Israel.)

3 He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, his God; And they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; 4 he shall be peace. If Assyria invades our country and treads upon our land, We shall raise against it seven shepherds, eight men of royal rank; ...

1. What insight does this prophesy of Jesus' birth give you regarding our relationship with him?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

2 Shepherd of Israel, listen, guide of the flock of Joseph! From your throne upon the cherubim reveal yourself 3 to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Stir up your power, come to save us.

15 Turn again, LORD of hosts; look down from heaven and see; Attend to this vine, 16 the shoot your right hand has planted. ...

18 May your help be with the man at your right hand, with the one whom you once made strong. 19 Then we will not withdraw from you; revive us, and we will call on your name.

Second Reading — Hebrews 10:5-10

5 For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6 holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. 7 Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God.'" 8 First he says, "Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in." These are offered according to the law. 9 Then he says, "Behold, I come to do your will." He takes away the first to establish the second.

10 By this "will," we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

2. How does this passage help re-define God's expectation for Israel and for us?

Gospel Reading — Luke 1:39-45

39 During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, 40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, 42 cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43 And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

3. What are the reasons for which Elizabeth proclaims Mary blessed?

4. How important in your life is Mary's example of submission and trust? Where do you feel a similar call to surrender?

5. What can we do to restore the wonder and awe of Jesus' incarnation?

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HOLY FAMILY SUNDAY—December 27, 2015

Introduction: Tracing one's genealogy, the study of human descent through family lines, is an occasional fad for some and an intense preoccupation for others. The quest to ascertain where we came from and to whom we are related is made more poignant by the isolation people experience, and by the family disintegration we see in our society. It is fun, and can be helpful to understand our family roots, for they can show us not only our lineage but give insight as to why we function as we do. In one sense history is a simple and natural compilation of family relationships. Men and women have become great and/or infamous because of the contributions of their family, or in some cases in reaction to their family.

Pope John Paul II taught that, "Since human beings are made 'through love' and 'for love,' and because love is 'the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.' This vocation is the heart of marriage and the heart of the family. Confirmed for Christians in the redemption won by Christ's self-sacrificing love, the demands and obligations of family life are liberating, not confining." When this love is present it can make the most impoverished home rich, and when it is absent the most opulent home becomes impoverished.

Most families love photo albums. When we flip through the picture pages of our children, their mates, and our grandchildren, we enjoy again the various joyful stages of family life. This week's gospel reading is like a page from a family photo album giving us insight into Jesus' family life, where Mary and Joseph, the Holy Family, provided just such a home of love for Jesus. Of course the Holy Family's home of love didn't just happen by accident, and neither will ours. Before they embraced the marriage bonds Joseph and Mary embraced God and were devoted followers and servants of his. That is why they were able to survive, even before marriage, the strain on their relationship which was brought about by Mary's untimely pregnancy. But because Mary was following God wholeheartedly she readily said yes to the Holy Spirit's call. Because Joseph was a just and holy man he not only set about to deal with Mary and this unexplained development in a loving way, but when he recognized that this prophesy was of God, he too wholeheartedly followed God at all cost. Their lives give us insight as to how we can similarly be a holy family. Loving, holy people make loving, holy families. This begins not with the first "I do" of the marriage ceremony, but with previous "I do's" to love and follow God at all cost.

As we look at this picture of Mary and Joseph's relationship with Jesus we see them relating to him in grace and freedom, and with respect and concern. In addition, we see Jesus living in a responsive and submissive relationship fruitfully growing in this environment of love. That is what a holy family is all about. It should be a mini-picture of the Church and of our relationship with Christ and with his people. It should be redemptive in nature, a place where forgiveness and reconciliation are commonplace. It should be revelational in manner, where insight into the nature and character of Christ is not only taught verbally but is demonstrated by the behavior of the members, starting with the parents. As Pope John Paul II explains, "Men, for their part are called to live their fatherhood as an icon of the very fatherhood of God."

Our family trees may have a few broken or diseased branches, and perhaps our own family did not begin on the solid foundation of total commitment to God. But don't be discouraged, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit we can begin afresh today to emulate the Holy Family and build our family into a redemptive, revelational environment that is holy to the Lord.

First Reading — Sirach 3:2-7, 12-14

2 For the LORD sets a father in honor over his children; a mother's authority he confirms over her sons.

3 He who honors his father atones for sins; 4 he stores up riches who reveres his mother. 5 He who honors his father is gladdened by children, and when he prays he is heard. 6 He who reveres his father will live a long life; he obeys the LORD who brings comfort to his mother.

12 My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives. 13 Even if his mind fail, be considerate with him; revile him not in the fullness of your strength. 14 For kindness to a father will not be forgotten, it will serve as a sin offering--it will take lasting root

1. How are lives affected by the behavior of previous generations according to this passage?

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 128:1-5

1 A song of ascents. Happy are all who fear the LORD, who walk in the ways of God. 2 What your hands provide you will enjoy; you will be happy and prosper:

3 Like a fruitful vine your wife within your home, Like olive plants your children around your table.

4 Just so will they be blessed who fear the LORD. 5 May the LORD bless you from Zion, all the days of your life That you may share Jerusalem's joy ...

Second Reading — Colossians 3:12-21

12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, 13 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. 14 And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

18 Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.

2. Which characteristic listed above do you think is the primary strength, and which is the greatest weakness, of your immediate family?

Gospel Reading — Luke 2:41-52

41 Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, 42 and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. 43 After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. 44 Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, 45 but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, 47 and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." 49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand what he said to them. 51 He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

3. How do you think Jesus' parents felt when they discovered that Jesus was missing?

4. What lessons can we apply from this snapshot into the lives of the Holy Family?

5. How could verse 52 be used as a blueprint for a child's development?