

Personal Notes
021229 Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, 17B
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This Sunday offers a great many choices. Choices are
Sir 3:2-7, 12-14 Psalm 128:1-5 Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 Lk 2:22-40
or, in Year B

Gen 15:1-6; 21:1-3 Psalm 105:1-6, 8-9 Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19 Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

Before I realized all of the above options, I began preparing Sir 3:2-7, 12-14, Psalm 128, Col 3:12-21 and Lk 2:22-40.

Since I have three scholarly references to Genesis, two to Psalm 105, one to Hebrews, and two references to overlapping readings in Luke, I will work six of these eight references into these notes.

My word for this Holy Family Sunday is **wisdom**.

The Presentation is the pertinent decade of the Rosary, the fourth of the Joyful Mysteries.

This is a very special feast for Saint Joseph.

Sir 3:2-7, 12-14 or Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3

Sirach, known as *Ecclesiasticus* in Latin¹, is part of the **wisdom** literature of the First Testament. *Nova Vulgata* uses a versification different from the Lectionary,² namely 3-7, 14-17. I do not know and may have forgotten how to account for the difference.

A lot in these readings is very personal to me. Grandma Jirran's brother was an irremovable pastor (when priests still had such tenure comfort) of Holy Family Parish in Cleveland, Ohio. I pay attention to the Holy Family. **Wisdom** rests in seeking God over all things. Such seeking is available to everyone beginning and ending at any time in life. Surely, in my case the rewards for such seeking are both material and immaterial. My life is comfortable, both body and soul.

¹ [Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita iussu Pauli PP, VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP, II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera](#) (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4

² [National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints](#) (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

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Mom abused her call to filial obedience. Sirach has it correct in how he directs family values toward **mothers**. **Mothers**, however, can overdo it.

verse 3b a **mother's** authority he **confirms** over her sons.

Such **confirmation** is Christian. Trying to deal with sexism in our society, I have noted that the rights and obligations of **mothers** and fathers, while overlapping, are different. **Mothers** tend to share and nourish as their obligations. Their rewards or rights are to be loved. On television, athletes will say "Hi Mom" but never "Hi Dad" as symbolic of my meaning. I do not mean that fathers are not loved, but that the love for father and mother are different. In our culture, as **Mom** shares, Dad competes. The reward for competing well is fear. What Sirach means when he writes that God confirms a **mother's** authority is that tenderness and love trump competitiveness in the eyes of the Almighty.

verse 5a he stores up riches who reveres his **mother**.

verse 6b he who obeys his father brings comfort to his **mother**.

"Wait until your Father gets home" is one-way **mothers** work out their frustrations. As an aside, my **mother** did not add that burden onto Dad. Back to the main point, I do not remember that my **mother** ever encouraged me to obey Dad because that would bring comfort to her. **Mom** erred in not looking to Dad as a source of her own comfort when I obeyed her. It always bothered **Mom** that I obeyed Dad more readily and easily than her. The reason may very well have been that I knew that obeying **Mom** brought comfort to Dad.

The idea is that the self-discipline involved in obeying **Mom** and Dad enabled me to focus my mind enough for academic success that, in turn, brought personal and professional success and happiness. The Catholic Church needs encouragement as the Church **wisely** encourages parents to parent their children.

verses 15c-16 kindness to a father will not be forgotten,
firmly **planted** against the debt of your sins
—a house raised in justice to you.

The idea of a plant in the garden of God was one of the tender ideas of the great almost-Twentieth Century Saint, Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-97). Thérèse thought of herself as a Little Flower in God's great Garden of Paradise. Thérèse found her

spiritual nourishment especially from Scripture and the works of John of the Cross (d. 1591).³

Gen 15:1-6; 21:1-3

verse 1 The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying:
 “Fear not, Abram!
 I am your **shield**;
 I will make your reward very great.”

Shield is no *Father*. Abraham is not *related* to God. Abraham is not invited to live God's own life, as in **wisdom**, we are.⁴

The idea in Genesis 15:1 is that Abraham believed in God's promises before, during, and after he was asked to sacrifice Isaac.⁵ Tough love is **wisdom**.

verse 5 The Lord took Abram outside and said,
 “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can.
 Just so,” he added, “shall your descendants be.”

This is the first of the patriarchal blessings, a blessing in which Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna hoped, along with Abraham and us. The other patriarchal blessings are found in Genesis 22:17; 26, 3-4.⁶

Psalm 128:1-5 or 105:1-6, 8-9

No comment on Psalm 128

³ The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism, general editor, Richard P. McBrien (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco: A Division of Harper Collins *Publishers*, 1995), pages 1251-1252.

⁴ Mark K. George, “Fluid Stability in Second Samuel 7,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002), page 35.

⁵ Robert A. J. Gagnon, “Why the ‘Weak’ at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000), page 80.

⁶ Mark Allan Powell, “The Magi as Kings: An Adventure in Reader-Response Criticism,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000), page 483.

Psalm 105

verse 1 Give thanks to the LORD, invoke his name;
make known among the nations his deeds.

This verse looks back to Isaiah 12:3. The thanks is for deliverance,⁷ then from Egypt, now from sin.

verse 4 Look to the LORD in his strength;
constantly seek his **face**.

The Canaanites had statues with **faces**; the Israelites did not. Seeking the **face** of God is a phrase taken from the Canaanites.⁸ For us, this phrase would mean to find the finger of God in our everyday surroundings, in those creations in which non-believers make idols.

Col 3:12-21 or Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

The following verses are from Colossians 3.

verse 12 Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience

verse 15 And let the **peace** of Christ control your hearts,
the **peace** into which you were also called in one body.

Peace, like cheerfulness and happiness, is something one can will for oneself, a type of insisting and letting the **peace** of Christ control your hearts, as Colossians puts it. That is **wisdom**.

Luke 2:22-40

Because there is little scholarly work that I found for these Holy Family readings, I will spend more time with the Greek.

verse 22 ... they took him **up** to Jerusalem ...

⁷ Sue Gillingham, "From Liturgy to Prophecy: The Use of Psalmody in Second Temple Judaism," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2002), page 472.

⁸ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 42.

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Bethlehem has higher elevation above sea level, than Jerusalem. This means that taking him **up** to Jerusalem is a type of technical term.⁹ Why not think of this as a taking of Jesus **up** into the hearts of the Faithful, by analogy at least.

verse 24 and to offer the sacrifice of
 a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,
 in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

As often presented, Jesus came from a “middle-class” carpenter’s family. The offering they choose, however, was the offering of the poor. I do not remember anyone ever preaching that way, especially just before the offertory collection. Notice that the pigeons are fledglings, not highly trained homing pigeons, for example.

verse 26 ... had seen the Christ of the Lord.

Luke means the Messiah.¹⁰

verse 29 “Now, Master, you may let your servant go
 in **peace**, according to your word

The Greek for *let your servant go* carries the connotations of manumission from slavery.¹¹

verse 31 which you prepared in sight of all the peoples

The Latin (the Greek is more subtle) has *before the **face** of all the peoples* meaning

verse 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
 and glory for your people Israel.”

⁹ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 178.

¹⁰ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 178.

¹¹ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 179.

Christ's **peace** is prepared before our **faces**. That is **wisdom**.

verses 34-35 “Behold, this child is destined
for the fall and rise of many in Israel,
and to be a sign that will be contradicted
-and you yourself a **sword** will pierce-
so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

The grammarian observes, “the climax of contradiction (the Cross) being obliquely implied in the suffering of Mary.”¹² My experience is that revealing the thoughts of hearts comes at the cost of the Cross. From the time of this fourth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, Mary and the Holy Family must have been much more aware of the cost of revealing hearts. Mary and Joseph must have spent considerable effort keeping Jesus out of as much such trouble as they could as he, inadvertently, revealed hearts.

The Venerable Saint Bede (672-735), priest and confessor, Doctor of the Church, observed, “But even to the end of this present world, the **sword** of most dire tribulation will not cease to pierce the soul of the Church...”¹³

verse 36 ... having lived seven years with **her** husband ...

The grammarian does not like the translation, “with **her** husband.” The meaning is *in wedlock, as a married woman*.¹⁴

verse 37 ... but **worshipped** night and day with fasting and prayer.

Worshipped translates the Latin *serviens* or *serving*. This is the public worship¹⁵ sense in which we used to speak of altar **servers**. *Serviens* also goes back to the root word for *slave*.

¹² Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 179.

¹³ Bede, “Exposition from the Catena Aurea” by Saint Thomas Aquinas as quoted in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996), page 167.

¹⁴ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 180.

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verse 38 And coming forward at that very time,
 she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child
 to all who were awaiting the **redemption** of Jerusalem.

The grammarian writes that **redemption** means ransom from slavery.¹⁶ We concentrate moving along the three Exodus-es in the Second Sunday in Advent: (1) from Egypt, (2) from Babylon, (3) from sin. Saint John Chrysostom (354-407), one of the Four Great Eastern Doctors of the Church, confessor, Archbishop of Constantinople, describes the Christian dispensation, “For when the lascivious becomes chaste, and the avaricious merciful, and the fierce gentle, then we have here a resurrection; since sin being dead, justice is now risen.”¹⁷

However, get the picture Luke portrays, this wizened old woman, night and day in the temple, coming forward, spoke about the child to all—Luke never says anyone listened. God’s voice was in her mouth, indeed. Gregory of Nyssa (+394), confessor, Doctor of the Church, puts it this way, “Because Anna the prophetess spoke but little regarding Jesus, and that with no clear meaning ...”¹⁸

verse 40 The child **grew** and became strong, filled with **wisdom**;
 and the favor of God was upon him.

To **grow** is an animal act first. To **grow** is also a very special human, rational animal, act, especially to **grow** in **wisdom**. To reflect that Jesus **grew** in **wisdom** is a comfort to my own **growth** and need to do more in **wisdom**.

¹⁵ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 180.

¹⁶ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 180.

¹⁷ Chrysostom, “Exposition from the Catena Aurea” by Saint Thomas Aquinas as quoted in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996), page 166.

¹⁸ Gregory Nyssa, “Exposition from the Catena Aurea” by Saint Thomas Aquinas as quoted in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996), page 168.

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Theophylactus, Patriarch of Bulgaria (765-840), ignoring the hypostatic union, whereby Jesus knew as both God and man, observes the following.

for if while yet a Child He had revealed all His **wisdom** He would be looked upon as something strange. So He revealed Himself with the growth of the years, that He might fill the whole earth. Not as one who receives **wisdom** is He said to grow in **wisdom**. How can that be perfected which was from the beginning perfect? Hence, *full of **wisdom**; and the grace of God was in Him.*¹⁹

This is **Holy Family Sunday** a time to refocus family values, values centered on **wisdom**, rather than personal control.

¹⁹ Theophylactus, "Exposition from the Catena Aurea" by Saint Thomas Aquinas as quoted in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996), page 169-170.