

Dear Padre,

A friend of mine took his life. He was a very staunch Catholic. His wife wanted to know if he could be buried or have a Mass in the Catholic Church.

Yes, your friend should most certainly receive a Catholic funeral and burial. "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives" (*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2283).

A person who is suffering with a mental illness or disorder, certainly a prerequisite for suicide, may not have the necessary mental freedom to choose something that is understood as grave or mortal. In other words, he or she does not have the necessary requirements for full and free consent of the will.

Not that long ago, suicide was often misunderstood. Thankfully, today we understand the havoc and suffering of mental illness, and that a person can be a victim, even if it might look like he or she is not. The great suffering of those who take their own lives must not be dismissed or discarded. The family members and friends of a person who suffers suicide should also not be judged but should only receive compassion and understanding. They, too, are victims, in the fullest sense of the word and in the truest understanding of what it means to be a fragile human being. ●



AMY STOUT / CATHOLICA

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR / DearPadre.org

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV



ANTONELLA ULLAURI / CATHOLICA

Young people of our time, like those of every age, are a volcano of life, energy, sentiments, and ideas. It can be seen from the wonderful things they are able to do, in so

many fields. However, they also need help in order for this great wealth to grow in harmony and to overcome what...can still hinder their healthy development.

ADDRESS, ROME, MAY 15, 2025

Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.

Monday	Thursday	Saturday
December 29 <i>Octave of Christmas</i> 1 Jn 2:3-11 Lk 2:22-35	January 1 <i>Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God</i> Nm 6:22-27 Gal 4:4-7 Lk 2:16-21	January 3 <i>Christmas Weekday</i> 1 Jn 2:29-3:6 Jn 1:29-34
Tuesday	Friday	Sunday
December 30 <i>Octave of Christmas</i> 1 Jn 2:12-17 Lk 2:36-40	January 2 <i>Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church</i> 1 Jn 2:22-28 Jn 1:1-18	January 4 <i>The Epiphany of the Lord</i> Is 60:1-6 Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6 Mt 2:1-12
Wednesday		
December 31 <i>Octave of Christmas</i> 1 Jn 2:18-21 Jn 1:1-18		



Embracing a Spirituality of Listening

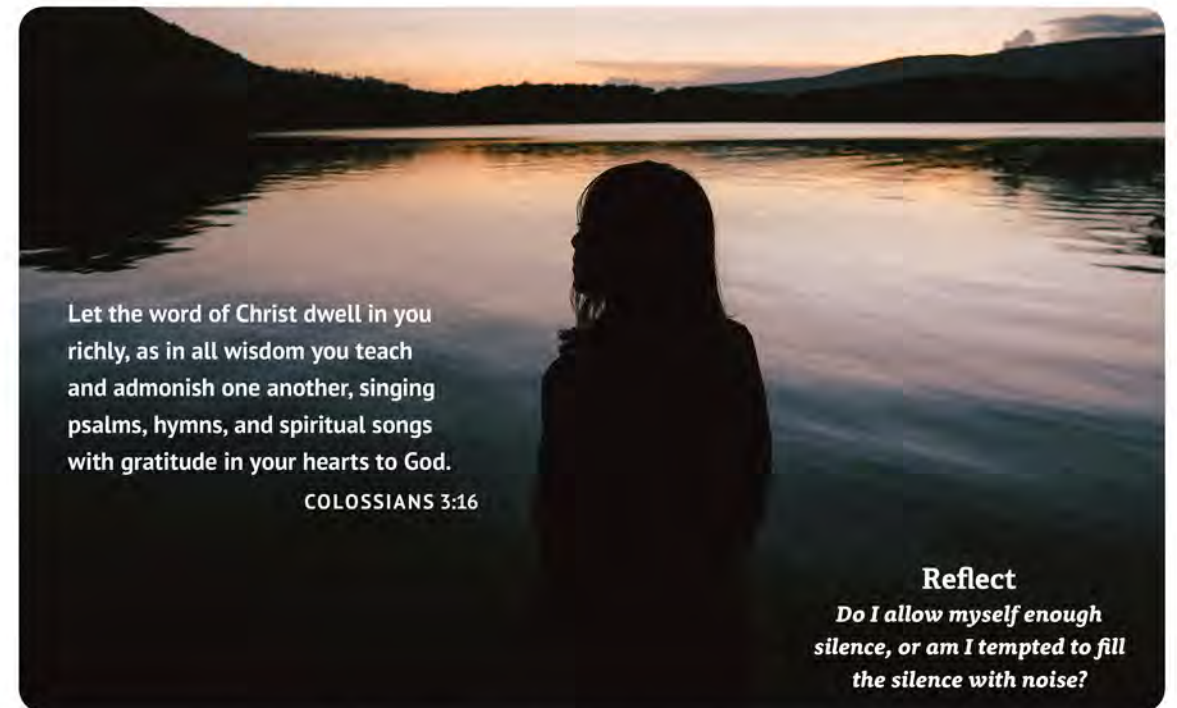
ANN M. GARRIDO

The most treasured prayer of Jesus' people has long been and remains the Shema: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is God. The Lord is One." Jewish spirituality is grounded not in seeing or touching or tasting, but in hearing. No one exemplifies fidelity to this way of being in the world more than Joseph, as evidenced in today's gospel. Joseph is one who listens to what God's messenger says to him and immediately acts on it. He responds to the call to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. Then, he responds to the call to return home with his family to Israel. As many have noted, Joseph never speaks in Scripture, but he certainly listens, and he certainly acts on what he hears.

Christmas is perhaps the noisiest season of the year. At gatherings of family and friends with festive music in the background, it often feels as if we are shouting over one another to be heard. It is a season when it can be hard to have deep conversations, even with God. Indeed, it can be such a busy season that sometimes our regular prayer practices fall by the wayside. But, if we do not make space in our daily lives to listen, might we miss messages that are important, even urgent, for us to hear, as in the case of today's gospel? Messages that require immediate response? What would it look like to carve out a bit of silence in this holiday season, to be like Joseph and regroup yourself in a spirituality of listening? ●



SCAN TO LEARN ABOUT AUTHOR ANN M. GARRIDO



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.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

Reflect
Do I allow myself enough silence, or am I tempted to fill the silence with noise?



The
Catholic Church
in Pocahontas County
West Virginia

OUR MISSION
If anyone
wishes to be first,
he shall be
the last of all
and the servant of all.
(Mark 9:35, NAB-RE)

ST. JOHN NEUMANN PARISH & CHURCH OFFICE, 714 Tenth Avenue, Marlinton WV 24954
ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST MISSION, 92 Catholic Church Road, Rts 250 & 92, Bartow WV 24920
ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX CHAPEL, 6332 Snowshoe Drive, Snowshoe WV 26209
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Patty Bryant
Margaret Bryant
Ann Burke
Danielle Cade
Dick Connor
Dale Kinnison
Drema Moore
Cynthia Olson
Quinn Riffle
Tristan Sizemore

EUCCHARIST THIS WEEK

Monday	8:00 a.m.	St. John
Thursday	9:00 a.m.	St. John
	12:00 p.m.	St. Mark
Saturday	5:30 p.m.	St. Bernard
Sunday	9:00 a.m.	St. John
	11:30 a.m.	St. Mark



St. John Neumann Church is open for private prayer every day during daylight.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered before each Eucharist or by appointment, and at St. Bernard on Saturdays 4:30-5:00 p.m.

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is available any time upon request.



Please call the Church office (304-799-6778) if you know of a parishioner who is sick, in the hospital or nursing home, homebound, deployed, or in prison.

To report an incidence of suspected child sexual abuse, please contact your local law enforcement agency, or you may confidentially contact WV Child Protective Services at 800-352-6513.
To report suspected cases of sexual abuse by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact the Diocese at 888-434-6237 or 304-233-0880.
To report suspected cases of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse by a bishop or eparch, please contact ReportBishopAbuse.org or call 800-276-1562.



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

“Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.”
(Matthew 2:13, NAB-RE)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTES

- New Year's day, **The Feast of the Mother of God**, is Thursday (January 1) and it is a day of obligation.
- **Thank you** to all the Church decorators – once again, everything looks wonderful.
- **Available for the taking:** church calendars (in English and Spanish), Liturgy of the Word (reading for all Sundays and feast days throughout the year), and of course your box of offering envelopes (the gift that keeps on giving!).



LAST WEEKEND		
	<u>attendance</u>	<u>collection</u>
St. John Neumann	42	\$1216.00
Religious Retirement fund		\$130.00
Fund for the Poor		\$250.00
St. Mark the Evangelist	10	\$617.50
Religious Retirement fund		\$10.00
St. Bernard Chapel	74	\$657.00
Fund for the Poor		\$669.00
total	126	\$3,549.50

- **Note:** The main part of the weekly bulletin now uses the “Calibri” font, along with “BakerSignet BT,” “BellCent Add BT,” and “Candara” in other areas. Fonts without serifs are thought to be easier to read for many of those with visual or reading difficulties, and so we are happy to help.

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CHRISTMAS - MASS AT MIDNIGHT

First Reading (Isaiah 9:1-6)

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing,
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as people make merry when dividing spoils.
For the yoke that burdened them,
the pole on their shoulder,
and the rod of their taskmaster
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.
For every boot that tramped in battle,
every cloak rolled in blood,
will be burned as fuel for flames.
For a child is born to us, a son is given us;
upon his shoulder dominion rests.
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.
His dominion is vast and forever peaceful,
from David's throne, and over his kingdom,
which he confirms and sustains
by judgment and justice,
both now and forever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13, *Grail translation, 1963*)

Response: Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

O sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.
O sing to the Lord, bless his name.

Proclaim his help day by day,
tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all the peoples.

Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad,
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,
let the land and all it bears rejoice,
all the trees of the wood shout for joy.

At the presence of the Lord for he comes,
he comes to rule the earth.
With justice he will rule the world,
he will judge the peoples with his truth.

Second Reading (Titus 2:11-14)

Beloved:
The grace of God has appeared,
saving all and training us
to reject godless ways and worldly desires
and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age,
as we await the blessed hope,
the appearance of the glory of our great God
and savior Jesus Christ,
who gave himself for us to deliver us
from all lawlessness
and to cleanse for himself a people as his own,
eager to do what is good.

Gospel Acclamation (Luke 2:10-11)

I proclaim to you good news of great joy:
today a Savior is born for us, Christ the Lord.

Gospel (Luke 2:1-14)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
that the whole world should be enrolled.
This was the first enrollment,
when Quirinius was governor of Syria.
So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town.
And Joseph too went up from Galilee
from the town of Nazareth
to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem,
because he was of the house and family of David,
to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed,
who was with child.
While they were there,
the time came for her to have her child,
and she gave birth to her firstborn son.
She wrapped him in swaddling clothes
and laid him in a manger,
because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region
living in the fields
and keeping the night watch over their flock.
The angel of the Lord appeared to them
and the glory of the Lord shone around them,
and they were struck with great fear.
The angel said to them,
"Do not be afraid;
for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy
that will be for all the people.

For today in the city of David
a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.
And this will be a sign for you:
you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes
and lying in a manger.”
And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly
host with the angel,
praising God and saying:
“Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Reflection (2020)

Advent is a time of preparation. We wait. And while we wait, we learn to hope: for a better time, for light, for the coming of Christ into our lives. The coming of Jesus Christ doesn't mean that everything will be perfect or just as we wish, it means that whatever is, will be easier with faith, easier with our burdens lifted, easier because we have hope for salvation.

Hope is powerful.

During this pandemic, we are hoping for the end, a time when we can get back to normal. But maybe our new normal can include things we've learned: spending more time with family, being more careful and caring for the well-being of others, being thankful to those who help us everyday (teachers, store clerks, nurses, trash collectors), and of course, taking more time for God.

Ultimately, our hope comes from our faith in God. God came to us in a real, human way at Christmas, giving us hope when there seems to be no reason to hope.

Reflection (2021)

Merry Christmas. We can say it in different languages. Feliz navidad. Mayad nga paskwa. The greetings of this season emphasize joy and festival, birth and Christ. Families gather, share a meal, exchange gifts, create traditions of their own. Some of us even take time to celebrate and worship in Church, giving thanks at the Eucharist!

Two thousand years ago, it was a very different picture: a young mother and her older husband, finding no where to rest except a stable, giving birth, wrapping the baby in rags, and placing him on a feeding trough. It didn't seem like they had much to eat themselves. Two thousand years later, the picture is not much different for many families today. But it doesn't have to be that way.

That baby, we know his name, Jesus, we know who

he is, the Christ. He taught us all how to live, so that someday we could live forever with him. He taught us how to give ourselves up to love, and share the blessings we have, so that no has to experience what he did at his birth in Bethlehem. He showed us how to welcome others, and accept strangers as our own family. He never said we would have everything, but that we would have what we need. He gave us an example of serving and total giving. He told us he didn't come to condemn us, but to save us.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if this Christmas every Christian was filled with love, every Christian shared what we have, every Christian welcomed each person, every Christian didn't judge others, but served others? Then Christmas will be truly merry.

Reflection (2022)

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone” Isaiah speaks that prophesy. Do you ever wonder who those in darkness are today, those who are dwelling in the land of gloom today? We are gathered to celebrate a wonderful feast, a joyful time, a coming together of those closest to us. All is well for us, but certainly that first Christmas, it was hardly well for Mary and Joseph and their new born son – imagine the scene: a stable, a feeding trough, hay and straw. But it was a time of light, because the new born son is the “Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.” Despite the gloom, there was light!

The same can be for those in darkness and gloom today. A little over a week ago, I joined with family in Tulsa to remember my brother, who died unexpectedly after a very short bout with cancer. We are a family that grew up without – without food, often without a home, often fearing deportation. But because of that, all of us have an intense desire to feed those who are hungry, to give a home to those who are homeless, and to defend the immigrants coming to our land. So it was particularly poignant for me that, the day before the funeral, my nephew told me that he and some of his friends had volunteered to serve the homeless and the needy that evening. He should have been preparing his eulogy for the memorial, but instead, there we were under the interstate bridge in Tulsa, with other volunteers. There were tables with clothes, toiletries, and anything someone living on the street would need. There were outdoor grills cooking hamburgers and hotdogs. There was a table where people could gather for the support of prayer. And there was even one man giving haircuts. And the remarkable thing is, they do

this every Thursday evening, every week of the year, under the bridge.

There is so much darkness and gloom for those in need in Tulsa, but there is also so much light, because “a child is born to us, a son is given us,” and those who follow him, want to share that joy with others.

Reflection (2023)

Two thousand years ago in Bethlehem, a baby was born in a stable, and placed on the hay in a feeding trough, while other babies and children were being killed by a leader filled with fear. Two thousand years later in Bethlehem, babies are born in shelters, and placed on rubble, while other babies and children are threatened or even killed. Why has so little changed?

Two thousand years ago, shepherds living in the fields, outcasts of society, doing what no one else wanted to do, came to worship the Lord. Two thousand years later, who are the outcasts of society, who are those doing what no one else wants to do, who are those coming to worship the Lord?

Two thousand years ago, hope was born, in the midst of all the suffering. Jesus was the baby, who was born to suffer and save each one of us, giving us hope despite everything that might go wrong. Two thousand years later, hope can still be born, if each one of us is willing to follow the Savior Jesus, to follow his way of selflessness and peace.

Two thousand years ago on this holy night, Mary and Joseph joyfully welcomed their first born child. Two thousand years later, we too joyfully welcome the Son of God on this holy night.

Reflection (2024)

The readings today speak of light and darkness. We celebrate Christmas at a time of year when the days become longer, when darkness gives way to more light. We celebrate the coming of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, who came to bring light to a world full of darkness. When he came, there was much darkness in the world, but even so, he brought light, hope, and ultimately salvation.

As his followers, we are called to eschew everything that creates darkness, and work for everything that creates light. As his followers, we are called to welcome the stranger into our country, to feed those who are hungry near and far, to comfort those who are ill and those who are in prison. Jesus came for all of us – by us I don’t mean only those of us here present, or America first, but he came for every person living

on earth, our friends and those we don’t consider friends, YET. As his followers, we are called to let his light shine throughout the world, so that Christmas is a celebration *not* for only a day but for every day.

Reflection (2025)

Merry Christmas. This is a feel-good day for many, a time for families to gather, especially those who live far apart, and a time to share and create new memories. It is wonderful, and I think everyone gathered for Christmas Mass feels something special, that’s probably why you came.

For some people, though, Christmas is more like the first Christmas, when Mary and Joseph were far from home, and looking for shelter so that she could give birth to her child. When we look at the manger, we don’t notice the harsh conditions that brought Jesus into our world. Perhaps if someone then knew who it was to be born, they would have found a better place for him.

If Jesus was to be born today, I am sure every one of us would find a very special good place for him. Mother Teresa often would say about the people she cared for “I see Jesus, and I care for him.” If we too see Jesus in everyone in need, then no one would be turned away today.

So, beginning this Christmas, have a wonderful time, and make it a wonderful time for everyone.

25 December 2025 - Christmas

Penitential Rite

Lord Jesus, Son of David: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, child of Mary and Joseph: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, Word made flesh: Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Prayer of the Faithful

Merciful Father, we have listened to your good news of love and acceptance, and we rejoice at the coming of your Son into our lives. With faith and confidence, we lift up our needs to you in prayer:

- for Christians everywhere, that we will be a source of love and welcome and sharing in our world, we pray
- for those in power and for those in government, that they will learn humility and compassion, we pray
- for farmers and shepherds, for immigrants and migrants, and for all who provide us with our food, we pray
- for our troops, for those in prison, and for all those far away from home, that they will be consoled, we pray
- for the Jewish people who long for the coming of the Messiah, and for all who worship God, we pray
- for pregnant women and those with small children, that they will receive the support and care they need, we pray
- for all the descendants of Abraham: Jews, Muslims, Christians and others, that they will learn to live in peace together in the Holy Land, we pray
- for those who have died, especially those who have no one to pray for them, that they will have the gift of eternal salvation, we pray
- and for your other intentions

(pause)

for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray

Loving Father, you sent your Son to be with us always. Listen kindly to our prayers, and give us hearts full of love and hope. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

HOLY FAMILY - YEAR A (READINGS OF YEARS ABC WITH GOSPEL OF YEAR A)

First Reading (Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14)

God sets a father in honor over his children;
a mother's authority he confirms over her sons.
Whoever honors his father atones for sins,
and preserves himself from them.
When he prays, he is heard;
he stores up riches who reveres his mother.
Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children,
and, when he prays, is heard.
Whoever reveres his father will live a long life;
he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother.

My son, take care of your father when he is old;
grieve him not as long as he lives.
Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him;
revile him not all the days of his life;
kindness to a father will not be forgotten,
firmly planted against the debt of your sins –
a house raised in justice to you.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5,
Grail translation, 1963)

Response: Blessed 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 labor of your hands you shall eat.
You will be happy and prosper;

your wife like a fruitful vine
in the heart of your house;
your children like shoots of the olive,
around your table.

Indeed thus shall be blessed
the man who fears the Lord.
May the Lord bless you from Zion
all the days of your life!
May you see your children's children
in a happy Jerusalem!

Second Reading (Colossians 3:12-21)

Brothers and sisters:
Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness,
and patience,
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.
And over all these put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,
the peace into which you were also called in one body.
And be thankful.
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.
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.

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

Gospel Acclamation (Colossians 3:15a, 16a)

Let the peace of Christ control your hearts;
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Gospel (Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23)

When the magi had departed, behold,
the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream
and said,
“Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt,
and stay there until I tell you.
Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.”
Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night
and departed for Egypt.
He stayed there until the death of Herod,
that what the Lord had said through the prophet
might be fulfilled,
Out of Egypt I called my son.

When Herod had died, behold,
the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream
to Joseph in Egypt and said,
“Rise, take the child and his mother
and go to the land of Israel,
for those who sought the child’s life are dead.”
He rose, took the child and his mother,
and went to the land of Israel.
But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea
in place of his father Herod,
he was afraid to go back there.
And because he had been warned in a dream,
he departed for the region of Galilee.
He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth,
so that what had been spoken through the prophets
might be fulfilled,
He shall be called a Nazorean.

Reflection (2025)

Today we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family:
Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We hear so much today about
protecting the “traditional” family, as if there is such a
thing. “Traditional” in the USA has come to mean
father, mother, one son, and one daughter. That is
hardly “traditional” in much of the world, or in much
of the past even in our own country, where the family
includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and even
close friends and neighbors.

The first reading from Sirach describes the
relationship between father and mother and children,
and the care they have for one another.

St. Paul speaks of the relationship between
husbands and wives, especially “compassion, kindness,
humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one
another and forgiving one another,” along with some
cultural biases specific to him and his time.

And in the Gospel, Mary and Joseph and Jesus flee
to Egypt as refugees, to avoid persecution and threats,
so much like the experience of so many families today
– but they flee as a family.

Celebrating family today, we are reminded that a
family is made of people, whatever the number and
whatever the relationship, but always held together by
care, forgiveness, and togetherness.

28 December 2025
Feast of the Holy Family - Year A

Penitential Rite

Lord Jesus, you are mighty God and Prince of peace:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are Son of God and Son of Mary:

Christ have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are Word made flesh and splendor of the Father:

Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Prayer of the Faithful

Almighty Father, you shower us with love, and you call us your sons and daughters, and so we can come to you with our needs in prayer:

- for our Bishops, that they will make the Church a welcoming home for every person, we pray
- for our political leaders, that they will enact policies that support families and children, we pray
- for mothers and fathers, that they will be blessed in their vocation as parents, we pray
- for families of all kinds, and for those without families, we pray
- for immigrants, migrants, refugees and exiles, that they will be welcomed, we pray
- for all of us gathered for Eucharist, that we will learn to live in harmony with each other, we pray
- for those who have died, for their eternal salvation, we pray
- and for your other intentions

(pause)

for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray

Merciful Father, we ask you to hear our prayers, we ask you to strengthen our families, and we ask you to show us how to love each other. We ask all this through Christ our Lord. Amen.