

that are fundamental to family life: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, self-control, forgiveness, and, above all, love.

There is no doubting that family life is not always easy or that it is not without times of suffering, conflict, and sometimes even fracture. Today's feast urges us to nurture family life, and to protect and support it in very practical ways in our local communities and in government policy and resourcing.

Policies and programs that support family life are our proper concern, be it work-life balance and flexibility in the workplace, or social welfare policies that provide support for families in times of need. Today's feast also prompts us to reach out in whatever way we can to those in our communities who are without family support.

Anne Hunt  
© Majellan 2019



## We Respond ...

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn)

The shepherds went in haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in a manger.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 127)

**ANTIPHON:** Happy are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

**RESPONSE:** Happy are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

**LECTOR:** 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.**

**LECTOR:** Your wife like a fruitful vine in the heart of your house; your children like shoots of the olive, around your table. **R.**

**LECTOR:** 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.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! May the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, and the fullness of his message live within you. Alleluia!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) Our God has appeared on earth, and lived among us.

**TODAY'S READINGS** Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Colossians 3:12-21; Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

**NEXT WEEK** (Epiphany of the Lord) Isaiah 60:1-6; Ps 71; Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

On this first Sunday after Christmas we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family. As for any couple, the arrival of a child was a momentous event for Mary and Joseph, affecting every aspect of their lives.

The gospels offer just two accounts of Jesus' childhood. In Luke's gospel, we glean something of Mary's experience, her joy and her sadness. Luke (2:35) tells us that when Mary and Joseph took the child Jesus to the temple, they met Simeon who, after blessing them, prophesied to Mary that "Behold, this Child is appointed to cause the rise and fall of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your soul as well."

Luke tells us that Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Matthew, on the other hand, writes of Joseph's experience of four dreams in each of which an angel of the Lord appeared and spoke to him. All four dreams occur during Jesus'

infancy, beginning with the dream in which Joseph is told not to be afraid to take the pregnant Mary as his wife, because she has conceived by the Holy Spirit. In a second dream, he is warned to take the family and flee to Egypt. In a third dream, he is told that it is safe to return to Israel and lastly, in a fourth dream, to go to the region of Galilee, instead of Judea.

These stories from Jesus' childhood, growing up in the care of his family, prompt us to reflect on the place of family in our lives. Today's feast reminds us that families are the important building blocks of our communities all over the world. It is in the family that we learn and practise living and working together, accommodating each other's strengths and weaknesses, learning to negotiate differences of opinion and priorities, respecting individual differences but working together for the common good.

The reading from the Letter to the Colossians speaks of the virtues

### The importance of family life

Family life is important and many would say life has never been busier. So, how do families stay ahead of the rat race? *Reclaiming family time*, a book by Tim and Sue Muldoon, "is a guide to slowing down and savouring the gift of one another". Tim and Sue provide some healthy tips on how to achieve a good life balance between work and the home and how you can enjoy your family even more. The book is available from Majellan Publications for \$19.95, postage included.

