

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph 2025

Today's Gospel tells the story of why St Joseph took the Child Jesus and the Blessed Virgin away from Bethlehem to the relative safety of Egypt. Remembering they were already far from home, having travelled there for the census and now they couldn't return home because of the threats to Jesus by a jealous king.

In 1952 Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical, *Exsul Familia* which starts with the following -

*"The émigré Holy Family of Nazareth, fleeing into Egypt, is the archetype of every refugee family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, living in exile in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king, are, for all times and all places, the models and protectors of every migrant, alien and refugee of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land, his beloved parents and relatives, his close friends, and to seek a foreign soil."*¹ Note, His Holiness says that any reason one feels compelled to leave their homeland makes them a refugee.

In recent years, in a similar way to the 1930's, politicians and the media have pointed towards refugees and migrants as being the source of domestic problems, with the effect of turning public opinion against those who seek a better or safer life by moving with their family to another land. The advent of social media allows fake news to spread quickly and has on occasion, resulted in mobs surrounding places where refugees should be able to feel safe, becoming a scene of violence and intimidation. This reflection is not meant to be political, as I believe none of the political parties have found the solution to the current migrant/refugee challenges; allowing extremists to make their voices heard and influence people.

As Christians we are meant to see in the refugee the faces of Jesus, Mary and Joseph; through our knowledge of the Bible, we know why they had to flee their homeland and find a place of safety. We thank God that they did, and this allowed Jesus to fulfil his mission which is to save all of mankind. Along the way, the Holy Family must have encountered other people during their exile, whose emotions would range from hostility and suspicion to genuine welcome and support; all of this while fearing for their lives.

How do we treat refugees today?

Do we see how vulnerable they are or do we fear them?

Do we suspect their motivations for being here?

Whatever our answer, we are encouraged to see the Holy Family in them, whatever their religion.

The Scriptures today encourage us to think of family. The first reading from the Book of Sirach encourages us to remember the importance of family for the entirety of life. I remember asking for this reading at my Grandad's funeral, the priest tried to persuade me to use another reading, but I insisted. For me this reading speaks loudly of how relationships within a family should be; respectful and loving. The reading talks about the circle of life, reminding us that as one generation starts to weaken another becomes stronger, the role of protector may change, but has to be done respectfully aware of the feelings of all.

¹ Pope Pius XII, *Exsul Familia*, available at [Exsul Familia Nazarethana - Papal Encyclicals](#) accessed 27th December 2025.

St Paul, in the second reading also gives advice on family life, which is useful for living as a community too. A Christian home should be one based on love; we are called to be holy, compassionate, kind, humble, meek and patient, we are called to forgive.

Is this a good reflection of how our homes have been, during interactions with family this Christmas?

Pope St John Paul II said of this feast day *“If we aspire to a deeper understanding of Jesus’s life and mission, we must draw close to the mystery of the Holy Family of Nazareth to observe and listen. Today’s liturgy offers us a providential opportunity to do so. For every believer, and especially Christian families, the humble dwelling place in Nazareth is an authentic school of the Gospel. Here we admire, put into practice, the divine plan to make the family an intimate community of life and love; here we learn that every Christian family is called to be a small ‘domestic church’ that must shine with the Gospel virtues. Recollection and prayer, mutual understanding and respect, personal discipline and community asceticism and a spirit of sacrifice, work and solidarity are typical features that make the family of Nazareth a model for every home.”*

As we prepare to enter 2026, I encourage us all to try and be more like the Holy Family. If we can all do our best, it will make our homes and our Parish truly wonderful places to be.

I wish you all a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Holy Family

CCC 531-534: the Holy Family

CCC 1655-1658, 2204-2206: the Christian family, a domestic Church

CCC 2214-2233: duties of family members

CCC 333, 530: the Flight into Egypt²

Please remember in your prayers

- All those who are sick, either at home or in hospital, especially those who have very few or no visitors.
- Those who have died and those who grieve for them.
- All people affected by war and that international treaties for the protection of non-combatants and civilians are respected and adhered to.
- All those attending the RCIA programmes
- Those attending the Youth Alpha programme which is a prerequisite for the Confirmation programme in our Pastoral Area.
- The success of the Pastoral Area Mission Plan.
- Those for whom the festive season is difficult.

² [Homiletic Directory, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments](#)

Deacon Tony

28th December 2025.