



ordinary
time



lectionary
reading

Cycle ABC

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Lectionary 17

Reading I: Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14

The Book of Sirach is classified as wisdom literature and as such offers sound advice for living life. The details of the interrelations among family members is spelled out and it speaks clearly of "honoring" those significant individuals in our lives, parents and children alike. This advice would be well to keep in mind as we are called to honor all people as images of God.

Reading 2: Colossians 3: 12-21

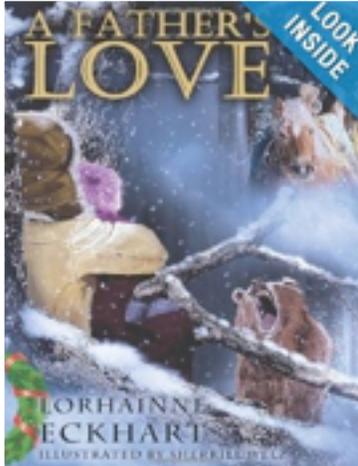
Saint Paul writes this heartfelt letter to the Colossians and speaks of wearing the beautiful virtues of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience as garments. Saint Paul's image of wearing these virtues as clothing illustrates how we are to have them close to our persons to recognize that we are to be clothed in them so that they reveal who we are and how we are to act in the world. Binding all of these virtues together is the ultimate gift of love, for it is out of sincere love that these virtues become true practices in our lives.

Gospel: Luke 2 : 41 - 52

Today's gospel presents us with Joseph having an experience, yet again, of God coming to him in a dream. You will recall that it was in a dream that God told Joseph to take Mary into his home and now he is instructed to protect Mary and Jesus by fleeing into Egypt. Joseph remains open to all of God's commands even though they come in a dream-like fashion. Each person in a family has a dream for their life and for their family. Clearly the primary figure in this passage is Joseph and although he does not say a word, his actions speak loudly of his trust in God.



children's
story



A Father's Love

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character
education
activity

**Love, in the Christian
understanding, is far more
than a mere emotion but
rather a way of life whereby
one is seeking the good of the
other.**

A Father's Love

In *A Father's Love*, fourteen year old David sets off to hunt the Christmas goose, a tradition that has been passed down from his grandfather to his father, and now to him. Unfortunately, his irritating little sister, Rose, has decided to join him. David just wants to find the geese, shoot one, and go home. But before the geese are spotted, David and Rose find themselves up a tree, hiding from an angry mother bear protecting her cubs. As night draws near, a heavy snow begins to fall and David and Rose fear for their lives. How can their father possibly find them in the dark and cold? How will they survive the night? Ultimately this beautiful story encompasses family love and the lengths all creatures will go in order to protect it.

The love of Joseph for God and God's son, Jesus and his mother Mary spurs him on to do all that he can to protect the child and his mother. Joseph is attentive to the instruction God gives him in the dream, to take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. This is very much an example of the sacrificial love that parents often enter into when caring for their children and spouses.

Think about the many small and large sacrifices that have been made for you on the part of your parents. In fact, there are probably a great many that you may not even be aware.

Activity

Step One: Have the students begin a journal that would record the sacrificial love that they have experienced in their lives and also to write accounts of what sacrificial love they may have offered to others in their life.

Step Two: The journal entries would be on-going, possibly through the New year, since the Feast of the Holy Family normally occurs very near the calendar New Year. If they choose to they might reproduce the journal so that they may have two copies: one for their mother for presenting on Mother's Day and likewise one for their father to present on Father's Day.

Sacrificial love is that dimension of love that seeks the good of the other, often at a cost of the one extending the love.



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

“Thank you” is a very important statement in life and often we do not express our thanks adequately to the persons that do the most for us. In fact, there is a real danger that we may become so accustomed to the many **sacrificial acts of love** we receive from our parents or guardians that we forget to thank them. Besides the journal entries that would comprise a book to present to your parents, it would be good to show thanks in as many creative ways as possible. A homemade thank you card, an extra chore done without being asked, a hug accompanied with the words *thank you* as a surprise are just a few examples. What else can you think of?

Look Feel Know Act

Being a member of a family is a very important role for each person that comprises the family. Often, the youngest members of the family, because of their greater need, receive the most benefits of being in the family. As each person grows in age it seems logical that one would assume more and more responsibility in the family and take less and give more towards making the family stronger. In this way you may express **sacrificial love**.

Make a commitment that as you grow from year to year, and advance from one grade in school to the next, that you will enter into some new ways of contributing to the family and increasingly recognize the sacrifices that are made for you.

Recognize that in addition to the family that you are a member of, you also belong to other families such as your school community, your parish and the town or city you live in. Recall all that God has given you and think of how you might thank God in words, through your prayer, but also in action by doing good works for others in the other families you belong to and offering a **sacrificial act of love** that is within your capability. Remember that God asks us to do simple things with extraordinary love and in doing so we are offering **sacrificial love** to others.

In *A Father's Love* we see the challenges of loving the people in our family. However, when there is great need the love makes itself evident. For example in the story, David and Rose's relationship is typical of moments in a brother and sister's life together. David is the quintessential big brother as he does all he can to protect his little sister, who moments before was driving him crazy. The Father's love is **sacrificial** and speaks to the essence of family love, and the lengths to which dedicated family members will go to protect the family and the love that exists within the family structure.

Pray that you will grow in love with each passing day for all those who are in your life. Show your love by saying thanks in as many ways that you can and as often as possible. Pray also that God will strengthen your ability to show your love in acts of kindness and concern for others.



**closing
tool**



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