

Young Apprentices

A RESOURCE FOR THE OCIA

CATECHUMENATE SESSION

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph • Year A • December 28, 2025

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—SIRACH 3:2-6, 12-14

The book of the Bible from which this passage comes goes by two titles. The first, Sirach, derives from the author, Ben Sirach (“Son of Sira”). The second, Ecclesiasticus, comes from the Latin, meaning *Church*.

SECOND READING—COLOSSIANS 3:12-21 OR 3:12-17

First, a list of virtues is found here by which Christians are to be invested. Second, Christ’s gift of peace issues forth from within oneself and is manifested in communal life. Third, thanksgiving to the Father through the Son in the Spirit becomes our way of life.

GOSPEL—MT 2:13-15, 19-23

Simeon kept faith his whole life that he would live to see the Salvation of God, the Christ of the Lord. Anna, too, spent her days worshiping God in the Temple, and gave thanks to God at the sight of the child who would be the Redeemer of Jerusalem.

Church Teaching: The Family

Today’s feast highlights the family as the context into which Jesus was born. It underscores the full fact of his humanity. The infant Jesus, under the watchful eye and loving care of Mary and Joseph, “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40).

The family, made holy by virtue of Jesus’ life with Mary and Joseph, becomes a source of holiness for every Christian. The duties of children to their parents, and parents to their children, find illustration and example in the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2201–2231

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: Chapter 28, especially “The Christian Family” and “The Domestic Church—the Church of the Home,” pages 375–377

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a white cloth, a candle, an open Bible or Lectionary, and a crèche with Nativity set figures, including the infant Jesus.

Discover

1. Since this will be the children’s first gathering since the fourth Sunday of Advent, take the time to ask them about their family celebrations of Christmas.
2. Invite volunteers to share their observations about the environment of the Church for this Christmas season. What did they notice? What did they like? Did anything surprise them? Why?

Deepen

1. Gather the children around the prayer table. Ask them what is different about the Nativity set today. (*The figure of the infant Jesus is in the manger.*)
2. Sing or play a favorite carol that mentions the Holy Family, such as “Angels We Have Heard on High.”
3. Proclaim the Gospel, Luke 2:22-40 (or the shorter form, Luke 2:22, 39-40).
4. Invite everyone to be seated.
5. Highlight the following discussion points:
 - Today the Church is celebrating the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
 - Invite the children to share the names of their family members.
 - Ask volunteers to share what makes their families holy.

Pray

Gather around the prayer table and invite the children to echo you as you lead them in prayer: *Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, / pray for our families. / Help our families to be holy families too. / Amen.*

You may wish to conclude by again singing a favorite Christmas carol.

Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Supplies

In addition to the prayer table setup, you will need copies of the participant handout, card stock or paper for making cards (or Christmas season thank-you cards), crayons or markers, and pencils or pens.

Sunday Word

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17

Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

Welcome

Welcome everyone and invite one or two children to share some of the key points from the **Dismissal Session**.

Invite

1. Share an example of something your family does to show faith in God or to grow in holiness as a family. Invite volunteers to share similar examples from their own families.
2. Gather the children around the prayer table and sing a song highlighting the Holy Family (such as "Angels We Have Heard on High").
3. Proclaim the Gospel, Luke 2:22-40 (or the shorter form, Luke 2:22, 39-40).
3. Ask how the Holy Family demonstrated faith in God. How can we imitate them in our families?

Teach

1. Invite the students to be seated.
2. Review and discuss the **Key Teachings** and **Faith Words** with the children. These may be found on the participant handout.
3. Continue the discussion, highlighting these key points:
 - Jesus was born into a family, the Holy Family, whose feast we celebrate today.
 - No matter who makes up one's family, all family members are called to respect each other and to help each other grow in love of God and neighbor.
 - We learn how to be disciples of Jesus in our families at home and in our Church family too.

Challenge

1. Allow time for the children to honor their families by creating thank-you cards or writing thank-you notes to their parents or to another family member.
2. Encourage the children to think of other families this week by donating food, clothing, toys and games, or money to a local outreach ministry or food pantry.

Pray

Gather the children around the prayer table. Invite them to quietly picture each member of their families and extended families and to ask God to bless each one in a special way. Then pray together the prayer on the front of the participant handout.