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First Reading: 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28
Response: "**Blessed are they who dwell in your house, O Lord**" (Ps.83:5)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 83:2-3,5-6,9-10
Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-2,21-24
Gospel: Luke 2:41-52

Christ was a child on earth and part of the Holy Family. Now as Risen Lord he is a part of every family. Even as marriage begins for Christians in the house of God (*Matrimony*), may God always have a place in their house.

The great prophet Samuel comes from a holy family life. His father Elkanah, "**went up with all his family to offer sacrifice to the Lord**" (1 Sam. 20:21).

Samuel's mother, Hannah, considers her child, Samuel, a gift from God. She offers him back to God, not just a one-off ritual but "**makes him over to the Lord for the whole of his life**" (1 Sam.20:28).

Samuel grows up as one of those who are "**blessed who dwells in the house of the Lord**" (Ps.83:5) for the Lord "**looks upon the face of his anointed**" (Ps.83:10).

For later pilgrims, the house of the Lord shifted from holy shrines to the great Temple in Jerusalem, "**how lovely is your dwelling place, Lord God of hosts**" (Ps.83:1). The dwelling place for Son of God on earth began in the womb of Mary and with Holy Family.

The Holy Family is part of the great family of God and John tells us how we become part of God's family if "**we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another**" (1 Jn.3.23).

It is in doing the will of God and keeping his commandments, that one "**lives in God and God lives in him**" (1 Jn.3.24).

The Gospel shares a scene of Jesus, as a child in the Holy Family. Although aware of his mission as a child in Jerusalem, he obediently goes with his parents to Nazareth, where he "**lived under their authority**" (Lk.2:51).

In growing up in the Holy Family, the Gospel says that "**Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men**" (Lk.2:52). Such is a model for child, at home and in the Church.

Today's **Gospel** portrays the mystery of finding Jesus in the Temple (Fifth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary). Jesus was obedient to his parents on earth and to his Father in heaven.

We see Jesus at home with his family and also involved in the Temple, his Father's house, the **Church**.

The **Teachings** of the Church emphasize the importance of family life at home and the greater family of God.

Be a **Witness** to family love at home and see your mission to serve God's greater family, the human family.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Read and discuss the Gospel of today, the **Feast of the Holy Family**.

The Eucharist is a sacred family meal. Let the New Year with the family at worship in the house of God.

Jesus grew up having learned the sacred Teachings and discussing them with teachers of the law.

Jesus' exemplary Witness is seen in his obedience to his parents and to God.

FOR TEENAGERS (*Christian Praxis*)

Name the Present Action: What is the significance of the Holy Family to you?

Your Story and Vision: Your experience of family life and what it should be.

Church's Story and Vision: *Here teacher speaks of family life qua home and Church .*

Yours and Church's Vision: *What it means to live and belong to the family of God.*

RCIA

Finding Jesus in the Temple is a mystery of faith. What were the dynamics operative in the Holy Family? What were the dynamics in Jesus himself as true God and true man? How much did he know and how much did he have to learn? He certainly amazed his hearers.

LIFE EXPERIENCE

Speaking of Samuel in the first reading today, calls to mind a picture that always caught my attention as a child. It portrayed a conservative middle-aged man with a big moustache. In spite of his kind face one sensed him being a man of the law in his looks. That man was Samuel Moss, my paternal grandfather. He was a Canadian Jew who married Angela, one of the daughters of John Dunn, a white chief of the Zulus. Talking about Jews in the family, didn't mean much to me, until later years when I learned more about them from the bible and history. As for my father, he learned his faith, not from his Jewish father but from his Catholic mother, Angela, and that is one of the greatest heritages in our family. I still wonder how much of my grandfather's blood comes out in us. "Things grow and grow," says an old philosopher, "but go back to their roots."⁽ⁱ⁾ The old picture looks down on us on the farm, in my brother's lounge. My sisters think my brother and I could have inherited some of his conservatism and being old-fashioned. I think its more in the girls. Ask my brothers-in-law.

⁽ⁱ⁾ LAO-TZU. *Tao Te Ching*. Transl. **Stephen Addiss** and **Stanley Lombardo**. Shambala. Boston & London. 2007. p.16.

LITTLE ANGELINA

Angelina has a good voice. Otherwise why was she part of the children's choir? Children choirs are an old tradition in the Church. St. Augustine of Canterbury even had a choir in the sixth century, consisting of children of pagan parents.⁽ⁱ⁾

When Angelina came home from singing Christmas carols, she was in a good mood but it wasn't so when she came out of the church. They had not sung her favourite hymn which was not a carol anyway. Fortunately, hot drinks and mince pies were served after. That took away the sins of the parish priest and put Angelina in a forgiving mood.

⁽ⁱ⁾ DEANSELY Margaret. "**AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY**". *Saint Austin Press*, Southampton. 1997. p.149.

IMPORTANT WORD: "*How lovely is your **dwelling place** O Lord of hosts*" (Ps. 83:1)

'**Dwelling place**' translates from the Hebrew מִשְׁכָּנָה (*mishekinah*) meaning habitation, more specifically, habitation of God, the temple, the sacred tabernacle. The root of the word is שָׁכַן, *shakan*, meaning 'dwell' from which comes the divine word שְׁכִינָה, **Shekinah**, referring to the Presence of God in the midst of his people, as seen in the pillar of cloud, the tabernacle and the Temple of Jerusalem. Interestingly, the Hebrew translation for Word made flesh "**and dwelt amongst us**" is וַיִּשְׁכֶּן בְּתוֹכֵנוּ, *vayishekon bethokhenu* (Jn. 1:14). The original Greek is ἐσκήωσεν, *eskenosen*, derived from σκηνή, *skene* (tent), meaning to pitch a tent, encamp, sojourn and dwell, such is the term used for God enfleshing himself into our lives and being with us.

Do we accept him in our midst or is he still a stranger? Christmas tells the truth.

Watchword:	“His mother stored up all these things in her heart” (Lk.2:51)
Hebrew:	ואמו שמרה בלבה את כל-דברים האלה Ve'immo shamrah belibah eth kol - hadebarim ha'eleh
Greek:	Και η μητηρ αυτου διετρει παντα τα ρηματα εν τη καρδια αυτης Kai he meter autou dietrei panta ta remata en te kardia autes.
Latin:	Et mater ejus conservabat omnia verba in corde suo
Spanish:	Y su madre guardaba todas estas cosas en su corazon.
Portuguese:	E sua mãe guardava no seu coração todas estas coisas.
French:	Sa mere gardait en elle le souvenir de tous ces evenements.
German:	Und seine Mutter behielt alle diese Worte in ihrem Herzen.
Afrikaans:	Sy moeder het al hierdie dinge in haar hart bewaar.
Zulu:	Unina-ke wakhweza onke lamazwi enhliziweni yakhe.
Xhosa:	Wazigcina unina ezo zinto entliziweni yakhe.
Sotho:	Mmae a boloka ditaba tseo tsohle ka pelong ya hae.
Irish:	Thaiscigh a mhathair go dilis na nithe seo uile ina croidhe.