

A Reflection from Fr. Canisius for the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Dear Parishioners,

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. Interestingly, the Gospel chosen for this feast day does not include a story of togetherness and harmony in the household, but of separation and anxiety. Then again, it is in those moments when the opportunities for reliance on God and the striving for holiness are most visible and appreciated.

We know the story: Jesus remains in the temple when everyone else leaves Jerusalem to return home, and after three days of searching for him, Mary and Joseph find him sitting, listening to the teachers, and asking them questions. They have been anxious and concerned.

But Jesus says, *Did you not know I must be in my father's house?* Jesus' utterance of his divine mission shows an obedience to the heavenly Father, while not dismissing that which was due to Mary and Joseph. They do not fully understand, but they acknowledge and love. Here, in this very statement, Jesus points to God the Father as his father. It is here that Jesus puts forth his divinity. Jesus, fully God and fully human, lays forth who he is at the age of twelve. Mary took all of this and pondered it in her heart, just as she did the prophecy of Simeon. While this statement of Jesus may not have been known to everyone, there was something in Mary that stirred her to keep it close in her heart, because her son was slowly revealing himself to the world.

Even in the midst of beginning to reveal his divinity to the world, Jesus went home with Mary and Joseph to learn from them. It was under the tender compassion, wisdom, and purity of Mary and the chaste devotion and loyalty of Joseph that Jesus *advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.*

Mary *kept all these things in her heart* and pondered them. May we, too, find our hearts constantly pondering the mystery of Christ and his great love for us.

May the light of Christmas and the hope of this newborn King shine in our hearts today and in the New Year 2025. Happy New Year!

~ *Fr. Canisius*