

## FIRST READING – C HOLY FAMILY

A reading from the first book of Samuel.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son.  
She named him Samuel, for she said,  
“I have asked him of the Lord.”  
Elkanah and all his household  
went up to offer to the Lord the yearly sacrifice,  
and to pay his vow.  
But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband,  
“As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him,  
that he may appear in the presence of the Lord,  
and remain there forever;  
I will offer him as a nazirite for all time.”  
When she had weaned him,  
she took him up with her,  
along with a three-year-old bull,  
a measure of flour, and a skin of wine.  
She brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh;  
and the child was young.  
Then they slaughtered the bull,  
and they brought the child to Eli.  
And she said,  
“Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord,  
I am the woman who was standing here in your presence,  
praying to the Lord.  
For this child I prayed;  
and the Lord has granted me the petition that I made to him.  
Therefore I have lent him to the Lord;  
as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord.”  
She left him there for the Lord.

Elkanah = el-KAY-nuh

nazirite = NAZ-uh-right

Shiloh = SHIGH-loh

Eli = EE-ligh



Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## SECOND READING – C HOLY FAMILY

A reading from the first letter of Saint John.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Beloved:

See what love the Father has given us,  
that we should be called children of God;  
and that is what we are.

The reason the world does not know us  
is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;  
what we will be has not yet been revealed.

What we do know is this:  
when he is revealed, we will be like him,  
for we will see him as he is.

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us,  
we have boldness before God;  
and we receive from him whatever we ask,  
because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

And this is his commandment,  
that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ  
and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

Whoever obeys his commandments abide in him,  
and he abides in them.

And by this we know that he abides in us,  
by the Spirit that he has given us.

Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – C HOLY FAMILY

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

Now every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."

He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in favour with God and human beings.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

Here we have another Old Testament reading that provided a model for the narratives of Jesus' birth, particularly that in Luke's Gospel. Samuel's parents offer him to YHWH "for ever," that is, for his whole life.

We moderns would object that Samuel had not been consulted and should have been left to decide for himself when the time came. Such problems were alien to the ancient world.

The parents in any case did not determine the child's destiny. They offered him for the service of the temple, but instead the child grew up to be a prophet who played a major role in the affairs of state.

Like the birth of Jesus, Samuel's birth is narrated in the light of his subsequent destiny.

### Responsorial Psalm: 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10

It is strange that this familiar psalm has not been used before in the Sunday Lectionary. It is a psalm with affinities to the songs of Zion and to the pilgrim psalms, and speaks of the joy of worship in the temple.

It would appear that it was designed for use at the autumn festival (Tabernacles). Its date of origin is sometime during the age of the monarchy (v. 1).

The worshiper envies both the birds that live in the temple their whole lives long, having built their nests in its precincts, and the priests, whose work keeps them in the temple all the time.

Thus, the psalm serves fittingly as a response to the reading about Samuel, who was dedicated to the service of the temple at Shiloh all his life.

### Reading II: 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

The overall context of this reading is the schism that has recently taken place in the Johannine community (see 1 John 2:19; 4:1). Certain members (we will call them "gnosticizing secessionists") have left the community because of their Docetic Christology and neglect of ethics (see 1 John 4:3; 4:20).

The Johannine epistler seeks to assure the remaining members of the community that they, not the secessionists, are children of God. This is a status that has been conferred upon them by God's love, that is, by his act of revelation and redemption in Jesus Christ.

The secessionists deny the full reality of that act and therefore do not share in that new status—they are not children of God.

It is noteworthy that the author, contrary to the practice of Paul, distinguishes between “Son of God,” a term that he uses exclusively for Christ as a Christological title, and “children of God,” a term for the derivative status of Christians. If this distinction were universally observed, it would ease the problem that such language causes for feminists nowadays.

Note how the author, in a manner this time closer to Pauline usage, preserves the “not yet” of this Christian status. Our being children of God is a reality, but it is visible only to faith.

Lacking faith, the world cannot see or observe it. Only when the final consummation occurs will the Christian status of divine childhood become visible.

This final consummation the epistler describes as the appearance, not of Christ, but of God. It will consist in the beatific vision of God.

The second part of the reading is the tail end of the most difficult parts of the New Testament. We take the “merciful” as opposed to the “severe” interpretation (see Raymond Brown’s commentary *ad loc.*).

Our own conscience may accuse us, but God is more merciful than we are with ourselves, and he will forgive us when our consciences accuse us. He will give us whatever we ask (the context suggests that what is being asked for is God’s forgiving mercy).

All this is promised because we—that is, the Johannine community, as opposed to the secessionists—are doing his will. His will is that we should believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (which the secessionists fail to do, since they deny the flesh of Jesus, the reality of his incarnation), and love one another (which the secessionists fail to do, since they do not love their fellow members in the community). They are cliquish and elitist.

Note here the Johannine form of the double commandment of love. While it is through keeping these commandments that we abide in God, we know that we abide in him only through the Holy Spirit.

### **Gospel: Luke 2:41-52**

The form critics classify this pericope as a “legend.” This does not necessarily mean that the incident is wholly unhistorical, as indeed Dibelius was careful to point out.

To call it a legend means that its purpose is not historical. There are many similar stories of the precocious childhood of a great person whose early life showed signs of coming greatness (for example, in the life of Buddha or Josephus).

We recognize certain redactional concerns of Luke: the legal piety of Jesus' home (see Luke 2:21-22), shown in the devout observance of Passover customs; the effect of these remarkable incidents on Jesus' mother (see Luke 2:19); and the emphasis on the human growth of Jesus (see Luke 2:40), though the last point may be modeled on the childhood of Samuel and may be designed to portray Jesus as the eschatological prophet. In that case it may even have been a feature of Luke's source.

That the core of the narrative is pre-Lucan is shown by the absence of any hint of the virginal conception ("his parents," "your father"). The answer of the boy Jesus in verse 49, with its reference to God as "my Father," seems to reflect the Church's Christology.

The basic incident, however, is not only pre-Lucan but may well rest upon an authentic memory. And even the allusion to "my Father" may be pre-Christological, reflecting Jesus' growing historical awareness of his unique filial relation with God.

This awareness will then be the basis and presupposition for his later submission to the Father's call and the acceptance of his unique eschatological role in salvation history.

Thus, one hesitates to dismiss this story as entirely without historical worth, even if in the form-critical sense it should be characterized as a "legend."

Our real concern must be with the evangelist's purpose in including this story in his Gospel.

It is evidently part of his picture of Jesus' family and its devout adherence to the Jewish law, which provided the environment in which Jesus developed, as Samuel had developed, so that he could later fulfill his role as the eschatological prophet and the bringer of redemption to Israel.

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