

Growing in Strength and Wisdom

A Missionary Commentary on the Sunday Readings

Sunday Readings

Sirach 3:3-7, 14-17a

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

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

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

[USCCB link to the Sunday Readings](#)

One of the delightful surprises, as I have gotten to know the many ways the call to mission has taken root in American Catholicism over the past nine years, is the missionary family.

Missionary families are formed in many ways. Some begin as young couples, just beginning married life, who begin their families in another country while serving on mission. Other families are already blessed with young children when they begin their mission together, learning the language and the customs of another country. The children develop friendships, begin school, actively contribute to the ministry of the mission, and, God willing, become “big” sisters or brothers as the family continues to grow.

Mission families are formed through long-term missions, where the family resides in another country for years, [like the McAuliff family whom we met through our podcast](#) just after they returned from the Farm of the Child in Honduras. Other mission families are formed through parish twinning where families enjoy intergenerational relationships. Through twinning, families develop long-term cross-cultural relationships that grow over a lifetime. Some mission families grow through transracial or transcultural adoption.

Missionary families can also serve the universal mission of the Church here in the United States of America. One of our podcasts this past year featured [Eric and Colleen Fitts from Bethlehem Farm](#), a Catholic community in Appalachia that serves the local community and teaches sustainable practices – fostering the “bond of perfection” with the earth as well as with the poor.

Families are hurting. Some struggle financially. Others are living with illness or trauma. All of us have some degree of dysfunction and are plagued by an avalanche of messages pulling us one way or another in the unexamined pursuit of the “American dream.” Perhaps the grace of today, after the mad rush toward Christmas, all the presents and celebrations, we can begin to hear on this New Year’s Eve another voice, another call, to a different drummer.

next page

continued from previous page

The grace that holds missionary families together, “the bond of perfection” that St. Paul teaches, flows from the shared commitment to dwell with others, in their culture, as a family rooted in faith.

The Holy Family, that we remember and celebrate today, was a missionary family. Together, as one heart and one mind, they lived salvation through their loving of others and one another. May all our families hear and respond to mission so, together, they can all grow in strength and wisdom.

Notes on the Sunday Readings

First Reading

Sirach, a wisdom book written within a patriarchal society, envisions a tender, complimentary, harmonious, and holy family.

Psalm

All blessings, including family and prosperity, flow from our relationship with God – the source, the context, and the goal of all relationships.

Second Reading

St. Paul teaches the virtues that should govern our relationships with “love, that is, the bond of perfection,” as the guiding principle. He describes what that might look like for families.

Gospel

St. Luke concludes the story of Jesus’ birth with his “consecration to the Lord” in Jerusalem. This offering of Jesus to God evokes the prophecy of Simeon and Anna. The proclaim Jesus as savior, “a revelation to the Gentiles and glory for your people Israel.”

*Notes and Commentary by Don McCrabb, D. Min.,
Executive Director of the USCMA.*

[Keep Go Forth... going with a Christmas donation.](#)

Please pray for the missions.
May God bless you in all the ways you Go Forth...



Go Forth ... is a service funded by the Catholic Communications Campaign and USCMA, *a community of faith leaders engaged in networking, formation, and advocacy for God's mission.* All who serve God's mission are welcome. Learn more at www.uscatholicmission.org or call 202-832-3112.

