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## "Faith is a precious gift to nourish"

**"A special prayer to the Lord for all the families of the world"**

VATICAN CITY, December 30, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).

*Here is the translation of the Holy Father's Angelus address to the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square.*

\* \* \*

Dear brothers and sisters!

Today is the feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth. In the liturgy the passage from the Gospel of Luke presents us with the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph who, faithful to the tradition, go up to Jerusalem for the Passover together with the 12 year old Jesus. The first time that Jesus entered the Temple of the Lord was 40 days after his birth, when his parents offered a pair of turtle doves or young pigeons for him (Luke 2:24), that is, the sacrifice poor people offered. Luke, whose entire Gospel is pervaded by a theology of the poor and of poverty, makes us understand ... that Jesus' family was numbered among the poor of Israel; he makes us understand that is precisely in them that the fulfillment of the promise comes to fruition (Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives, 96 [Italian edition]). Today Jesus is again in the Temple, but this time he has a different role, which involves him personally. With Mary and Joseph he undertakes the pilgrimage to Jerusalem according to the prescription of the Law (cf. Exodus 23:17; 34:23 ff.), even though he was not yet 13: a sign of the deep religiosity of the Holy Family. However, when his parents set out to return to Nazareth, something unexpected happens: without saying anything about it, he remains in the city. Mary and Joseph search for him for 3 days and find him in the Temple speaking with the teachers of the Law (cf. Luke 2:46-47); and when they ask him for an explanation, Jesus answers that they must not be surprised because he was where he was supposed to be, that was his house, with the Father, who is God (cf. Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives, 143 [Italian edition]). He professes to be in the temple of his Father, writes Origen, that Father whom he has revealed and of whom he says that he is the Son (Homilies on the Gospel of Luke, 18:15).

Mary and Joseph's worry over Jesus is the same as all parents who raise a child, introduce him to life and to the understanding of reality. Thus, today we must say a special prayer to the Lord for all the families of the world. Imitating the Holy Family of Nazareth, parents seriously concern themselves with the development and education of their children so that they grow up to become responsible men and women and honest citizens, never forgetting that faith is a precious gift to nourish in their children and to do this by personal example as well. We also pray that every child be welcomed as a gift of God and be sustained by the love of father and mother so that he grow like the Lord Jesus in wisdom, age and grace before God and men (Luke 2:52). May the love, fidelity and dedication of Mary and Joseph always be an example for all Christian spouses, who are not their children's friends or the owners of their children's lives but the stewards of this incomparable gift of God.

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May the silence of Joseph, the just man (cf. Matthew 1:19), and the example of Mary, who treasured everything in her heart (cf. Luke 2:51), make us enter into the mystery of the Holy Family with complete faith and with whole of our humanity. I wish for all Christian families to live in the presence of God with the same love and the same joy as the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

*[Following the recitation of the Angelus the Holy Father greeted those present in various languages. In English he said.]*

I welcome all the English-speaking visitors present for this Angelus prayer. Today the Church throughout the world celebrates the Feast of the Holy Family. May Jesus, Mary and Joseph bring greater love, unity and harmony to all Christian families, that they in their turn may be a firm example to the communities in which they live. May God bless you and your dear families!

*[Concluding in Italian he said:]*

I wish everyone a good Sunday and end of the year in the light and peace of the Lord. Have a good Sunday!

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