

GOSPEL

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

After the wise men had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.' So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet:

I called my son out of Egypt.

After Herod's death, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead.' So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, went back to the land of Israel. But when he learnt that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judaea he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he left for the region of Galilee. There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way the words spoken through the prophets were to be fulfilled:

He will be called a Nazarene.

REFLECTION OF POPE LEO XIV

28 December 2025

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, and the Liturgy offers us the story of their flight into Egypt (cf. Mt 2:13-15, 19-23).

It is a moment of trial for Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Indeed, the bright image of Christmas is suddenly almost eclipsed by the disturbing shadow of a deadly threat, which has its origin in the troubled life of Herod. A cruel and bloodthirsty man, who is feared for his brutality, but precisely for this reason he is deeply lonely and gripped with the fear of being deposed. When he learns from the Magi that the "king of the Jews" has been born (Mt 2:2), feeling this to be a threat to his power, he decrees that all children of the same age

as Jesus should be killed. In his kingdom, God is performing the greatest miracle in history, in which all the ancient promises of salvation are fulfilled, but he cannot see this because he is blinded by the fear of losing his throne, riches and privileges. In Bethlehem there is light and joy as some shepherds have received the heavenly announcement and have glorified God before the manger (cf. Lk 2:8-20). But none of this can penetrate the armored defenses of the royal palace, except as a distorted echo of a threat to be stifled with blind violence.

It is precisely this hardness of heart, however, that further highlights the value of the presence and mission of the Holy Family. In the despotic and greedy world represented by the tyrant, it is the birthplace and cradle of the only possible answer of salvation, that of God who, in total gratuitousness, gives himself to men without reserve and without pretension. Being obedient to the voice of the Lord by taking his Bride and child to safety, the gesture of Joseph is revealed in all its redemptive significance. In Egypt, the flame of domestic love, to which the Lord has entrusted his presence in the world, grows and gains strength in order to bring light to the whole world.

As we contemplate this mystery with wonder and gratitude, we think of our families and the light they can bring to the society in which we live. Unfortunately, the world always has its "Herods," its myths of success at any cost, of unscrupulous power, of empty and superficial well-being, and it often pays the price in the form of loneliness, despair, divisions and conflicts. Let us not allow these mirages to suffocate the flame of love in Christian families. On the contrary, in our families, we should cherish the values of the Gospel: prayer, frequent reception of the sacraments – especially Confession and Communion – healthy affections, sincere dialogue, fidelity, and the simple and beautiful concreteness of everyday words and gestures. This will make them a light of hope for the places in which we live; a school of love and an instrument of salvation in God's hands (cf. Francis, Homily at Mass for the 10th World Meeting of Families, 25 June 2022).

Let us therefore ask our Father in Heaven, through the intercession of Mary and Saint Joseph, to bless our families and all families throughout the world, so that by following the model of his Son made man, they may be for all an efficacious sign of his presence and his endless charity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



Head: Who or what do you think Pope Leo XIV is referring to when he speaks about the “Herods” of our modern world?



Heart: Which pressures, values, or expectations today most threaten peace, love, or faith in family life — either in your own experience or in families you know? For you personally, what pressures, values, or expectations in your life right now most threaten your peace, love, or faith?



Hands: What is one concrete choice your family, household, or close relationships could make to resist these “Herods” and more deliberately protect what truly gives life?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.