

Session One

Waiting for the Lord to Bless Us

We begin our journey with the Holy Family of Nazareth by creating a vision of what it means to be a domestic church. In this first session, we will learn from Mary and Joseph how families are called to embrace God's invitations with courage and trust.

Let's Read Scripture

On *The Heart of the Family's* website, play Video One and Video Two.

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, the angel said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But Mary was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"

And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So, all went to be enrolled, each to his own town.

And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Let's Reflect

After you play the second video, invite each family member to take a moment to think about their responses to these reflection questions. When everyone is ready, share your responses with each other. Remember to listen with an open heart to the words, thoughts, and experiences of your family members.

- Mary and Joseph said yes to God's plan and grew in love and care for one another. What is one action you can do this week to show more of your love and care for members of your family?
- Think about your life: which includes your work, your school, your responsibilities and your decisions: What is one way that you can begin to experience more trust in our Lord as Joseph did, or more courage like Mary did?

Let's Pray

After you share your responses, play Video Three of this session and pray along as a family.

For this prayer, our priest will read the first sentence, and he will invite your family to read together the bold text.

Let us pray.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Blessed Virgin Mary, you said yes to the plan that God had for you.

Help our family to hear and respond with generosity and trust every time that God calls us.

Blessed St. Joseph, you cared for and protected mother and son.

Help our family to become a gift to the other through acts of love and mercy.

Most Holy Child Jesus, your birth brought hope, peace, and love to Mary, Joseph, and to the world.

Grant our family the grace to experience the fruits of your presence in the routines of every day of life.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
Pray for us.

Let's Act

Build a little altar at home. A domestic church sanctifies the time and the places where the family gathers. Use the prayer space you create as a gathering point for your family's prayer.

- Find a space at home for your altar. The living room is a good option, as it will be accessible to everyone.
- Use a tablecloth. Throughout the year, you can change it to match the colors of the liturgical calendar, for example, you can use purple for Lent and Advent, white for Easter, green for Ordinary time etc.
- Place a crucifix in the center. Jesus is the center of our faith. May He also be at the heart of our family.
- Use an image or statue of Mary. She always accompanies us on our journey. You can use any Marian image, for example a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
- Add a Bible that you can read as a family. It can be a children's Bible so that adults can read Bible stories to their children or grandchildren at home.
- Add a candle. You can use a real candle if it is safe, or a battery-operated candle.
- Over time, add additional decorations such as flowers from your garden, images of other saints you have a devotion to, or a prayer book.

Share a family story. We started this session by bringing to mind significant moments in the life of our family. Those moments live in family photo albums and in many objects that we keep around the house as souvenirs or reminders. For this session, we invite you to go through your photo album or through your house, and find one picture or object that reminds you of a beautiful moment you shared with your domestic church. Maybe it's an old memory; maybe it's something your family did recently. When you find it, regroup again and share that story. As you tell the story, pass around that picture or the object for everyone to see, and don't forget to ask as many questions as you want. But please remember to do so respectfully.