

# LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



[www.orlaghinthecity.ie](http://www.orlaghinthecity.ie)

**THE HOLY FAMILY,**

**28th December 2025**

**Matt. 2:13** Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, <sup>15</sup> and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

**Matt. 2:19** When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, <sup>20</sup> "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." <sup>21</sup> Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup> There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean."

Ordinarily Christians imagine Mary and Joseph enjoying the company of their son Jesus in their little home in Nazareth in an enviable atmosphere of peace and happiness. This is not the picture that the evangelist Matthew gives us of the holy family. His somber account of the early years of Jesus shatters all the fantasies we build around Christmas.

According to Matthew, Jesus' family could not live in peace. Herod wants to kill the child so one day he would not snatch his power from him. Joseph has to act fast. The danger is imminent. Take the child and his mother "at night", and without waiting for a new dawn "into Egypt".

The journey is hard and dangerous. Mary and Joseph remember the hardships endured by their people in that same desert. Now they are reliving them with their son Jesus. The three are seeking asylum in a foreign country far from home and from their people. All is uncertainty and insecurity. They don't know when they will be able to return. They will be told.

After Herod's death, the family breathes a sign of relief and begins the journey back home. But Archelaus reigns in Judea, a man who, according to the historian Flavius Josephus, was known for his cruelty and tyranny. Joseph is afraid. It is not a safe place for Jesus. They will move to Galilee and settle down in Nazareth, a village lost in the mountains, which, so far, seems a less dangerous place.

It is in this way that the holy family lives, protecting their son so that he can survive, migrating from one place to another in search of bread and work, homeless and insecure in a land dominated by powerful kings such as Archelaus or Herod.

The great news of Christmas is that God was not born to the privileged of the earth, to celebrate his coming with tables loaded with dinner and superfluous gifts. He was born to share our lives, bringing hope to those who cannot expect much from anyone except God.

**JOSÉ A PAGOLA - Following in the Footsteps of Jesus.(Year A)**

## Thought for the day

Our Gospel today omits—understandably?— the brutal massacre of the innocents. While the story is indeed brutal, it is unfortunately not unrealistic. Its omission is a pity because the tragic side of life is underscored, in different ways, by both Matthew and Luke, in anticipation of the passion. They were not composing sweet scenes for Christmas cards! On the contrary, they were addressing the full human condition, in its mystery, its joys and its tragedies. It is precisely within the family that we encounter death, life, happiness and the sheer wonder of being at all. Today's feast invites us to look unflinchingly at the whole picture, in all its complexity.

**Note** Although this action [the massacre] is complete in character for the paranoid Herod, who killed his own sons, there is no historical record nor even any hint of this event elsewhere in the New Testament. Instead, the purpose of the story is, again, a recapitulation, this time of the story of Moses. Cf. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "All sons that are born you must throw into the river, but all daughters you may let live." (Exodus 1:22)

**KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA - [www.tarsus.ie](http://www.tarsus.ie)**

In this extract from Matthew which brings to an end the infancy story in the gospel, the evangelist shows how God protects and cares for his chosen one. It is useful to remember when reading about the birth of Jesus that all these stories were first told in the light of Easter faith. In other words, in the entire narrative of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God is seen as faithful to his promises and to Jesus, his chosen one.

The Holy Family of Nazareth experienced the pain of living through politically unstable times. Herod's son Archelaus was even more of a tyrant than his father and after just a few years was removed from office by the Romans. The incident in today's gospel shows this young family as refugees fleeing violence, and migrants looking for work. Their lot is a common one in today's world.

## REFLECTION

Today's feast and the readings put before us are a reminder that families play a vital role in determining what kind of people we become. An atmosphere of love and respect, of acceptance and forgiveness is one that allows us to come to a deeper appreciation of who God is. The readings are also a reminder not only of our duty of care towards one another, but also of the fact that no matter how difficult and uncertain our circumstances, God is always at work to bring good out of evil.

**SEAN GOAN - Let the Reader Understand, Year A**

## POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The threat to the child Jesus put Joseph in a situation where he had to make a quick and yet wise decision. Perhaps you have also had to make a speedy response to an unexpected crisis. Who were the 'angels' who guided you to wise decisions? Remember them and give thanks.
2. The whole narrative is designed to bring out the guidance of God's providence for the child Jesus. Have there been times when you have been grateful that things worked out well for you despite adverse circumstances or experiences?
3. External forces forced migration on Joseph and his family, until he came to establish a home in Nazareth. Where have you lived before coming to the place you now call home? How has this journey helped to fashion the person you are now? Perhaps you have a mixture of gratitude and regrets as you look back. Give thanks for the good memories. What helps you to deal with the disappointments and hurts in the past? Bring them to God with a prayer for further healing.
4. The story and today's feast remind us of the importance of the family in nourishing and fostering new life. Recall and give thanks for those in your own childhood who helped you to find your way in life.

**JOHN BYRNE OSA - *Intercom***

## Textual Comments

In the first section Joseph is inspired by "an angel of the Lord". The text brings out very well Matthew's testimony to St Joseph. He was obedient to the word of the Lord – it did not really matter how it came to him.

Joseph stayed in Egypt for a long time. He waited "until Herod was dead". According to Matthew, God called the young Messiah out of the land of Egypt, and the prophet reminds us of that. This was the country where his ancestors had lived and been persecuted for years. He was now to re-enact their destiny.

The evangelist then illustrates his narrative with a text found in the Bible. The prophet Hosea spoke of Israel as a child who was dearly loved by his heavenly Father. It was said of him, "When Israel was a child, I loved him and I called my son out of Egypt." This is what happened to Jesus. He was God's beloved Son and the Father called him "out of Egypt".

We remember now situations in our own families. We too must allow ourselves, like Joseph, to be guided by God in all he wants us to do – for ourselves, and to help others we meet. Sometimes God will appear to us in a dream. Usually however it will be by some other intervention. It could be through friends who talk to us, or others we meet in our daily living.

**MICHEL DE VERTEUIL - Looking at Life through the Sunday Gospels**

The Word was made flesh in the incarnation, and ever since we have tried to make that flesh into Word again."  
Cardinal Martini