



Society of African Missions

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Visit our website
www.smafathers.org



Administration:

Fr Ranees A. Rayappan,
Provincial Superior
Fr Dermot Roache,
House Superior

Mass Schedule

Sundays

8:00 am; 10:00 am; 12 noon

Weekdays & Holy Days

8:00 am; 9:30 am; 11:45 am

Christmas & New Year's Day

8:00 am; 10:00 am; 12:00 noon

Confessions

Saturdays 4:30 pm to 5:00 pm

Bereavement & Visit to the Sick

Contact Fr. Dermot Roache

201-567-0450 Ext. 212

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Rosary

Every Wednesday at 11:00 am

Followed by Mass, Adoration

and Benediction at 5:30 pm

The Little Way of St. Therese

of Lisieux

2nd Sundays after 12 pm Mass

Bible Reflection Group

Thursdays: 7:30 pm in the hall

Perpetual Mass Association

Office open Monday-Friday

from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm

S.M.A. Vocation Office

Fr. Julien Esse, SMA

551-449-4357

African Art Museum

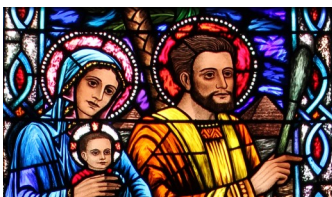
Open daily. Contact:

Fr. James McConnell

201-567-0450 Ext. 242

Fr. Michael Bova

201-567-0450 Ext. 207



FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

Masses for the week of DECEMBER 29, 2019—JANUARY 4, 2020

Date	Time	Intention	Requested by:
Sun.-Sat.	8:00	Liv & Dec Benefactors of SMA	
Sun. Dec. 29	10:00	Annie Murphy+	Michael Murphy
	12:00	Maria Valdes+	Friend
Mon. Dec. 30	9:30	Bill Moran+ Bill's Birthday	Jinnie Moran
	11:45	Ancy Pallyath George	
Tue. Dec. 31	9:30	Special Intentions of Neill & Forgrave Families	
	11:45	Special Intentions of Stoever & Mongiello Families	
Wed. Jan. 1	9:30	Special Intentions Carey Joyce	Michael Murphy
	11:45	Fe Lagpagan (Liv.)	Richard & Lydia
Thurs. Jan. 2	9:30	Amador Rodriguez+	Fleming Family
	11:45	Sr. Anne Hamill (Liv.)	Sister
Fri. Jan. 3	9:30	Special Intentions Neill & Forgrave Families	
	11:45	Special Intentions Stoever & Mongiello Families	
Sat. Jan. 4	9:30	Special Intentions Neill & Forgrave Families	
	11:45	Special Intentions Stoever & Mongiello Families	

Today's Readings

First Reading Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6. 12-14

It is in the family that we first live out our baptismal calling to love.

Second Reading Colossians 3:12-21

Let the message of Christ, in its richness, find a home with you.

Gospel Matthew 2:13-15. 19-23

Jesus is called out of Egypt to form a new people of God.

The SMA Community wish you all a blessed New Year!

REFLECTION

In today's Gospel we see two Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled in Christ Jesus. First, "Out of Egypt I called my Son" and second, "He shall be called a Nazorean." The first prophecy comes from the Book of the Prophet Hosea where he is referring back to the Exodus. The Prophet Hosea is remembering when Israel was just a baby of a nation and God delivered his people out of bondage and slavery in Egypt. However, in today's Gospel, "Out of Egypt I called my Son" refers to God hiding Jesus away in Egypt to avoid Herod's decree to kill all children two years and under and then calling him back from Egypt when Herod was dead. This seems to be unrelated to anything Hosea was talking about. How can Matthew say this flight to Egypt fulfilled the words of the prophet Hosea when the two events seem connected by no more than the word Egypt? How can this possibly be a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy? Hold that question for a few moments.

Also, the Gospel today says that Jesus dwelled in a town called Nazareth so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean." Scholars have been puzzled with this line of the Gospel as it is not a direct quote from the Old Testament. So what is Matthew referring to? What prophet said this? Some scholars argue that Matthew has in mind the Greek translations of Judges 13:5,7, and 16:7 where Judges 13-16 describes the life of Samson, a "Nazirite" known for his rather supernatural strength. The Hebrew term Nazirite means consecrated or holy.

The key connection is that the Greek translations for the word Nazirite and Nazorean are extremely close. Matthew more than likely recognized this linguistic link between "Nazarene" and "Nazirite." Perhaps Matthew also saw in the story of Samson a Christ-like figure. If we compare these two figures, we notice many parallels. For example, Samson's mother was promised by an angel that she would conceive and bear a son, that he would be a Nazirite. Her son was given a supernatural strength so as to bring, albeit brief, relief for the Israelites from the Philistines. Similarly, in Matthew Jesus' birth was announced by an angel who said that he will be conceived by the Holy Spirit and who promised that Jesus would save God's people from their sins. Jesus himself is the supernatural strong man, defeating the strength of Satan.

If we continue with the comparison, we notice that, like all Old Testament foreshadowing of Christ, there are differences among the similarities. For example, Samson falls for the ploys of the Philistines by the woman he loves, and as a result loses his strength, his freedom, his sight, and eventually, his life. In contrast, Jesus is confronted with the deceptions of Satan, but does not succumb to them. However, Jesus' ultimate act of triumph over his "enemies" Satan, sin, and death also involves the giving of his own life, on the cross. After Samson was captured, he stretched out his hands to dislodge the pillars of the Philistine house in which he was imprisoned, taking down numerous Philistines with him. Jesus, in turn, stretched out his own hands on the cross, and destroyed the powers of sin and death that reigned over the human race. A victorious strength exercised in weakness and complete obedience to the Father. Whereas Jesus' sacrifice was perfect, Samson's was imperfect, shadowy.

Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament, but what does that exactly mean? Speaking in the terms of today's Gospel, how does Jesus fulfill these two prophecies? Well, fulfillment can mean in a broad sense the bringing to light what previously had been in the shadows. For example, Matthew looked back and saw an analogical correspondence between the history of the nation of Israel and the history of the Messiah Jesus. He tactfully and carefully drew analogies between the events of the nation's history and the historical incidents in the life of Jesus. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is cast as the true and faithful Israel. Matthew is retelling Israel's well known story, but he's putting Jesus right in the middle as the main character in the story. Jesus is the new Israel.

Jesus is the faithful Son called out of Egypt, filling up what was lacking in the first faithless son, Israel. For example, whereas Samson succumbed to the temptations of the Philistines, Jesus resisted the temptations of the devil. In addition, whereas Samson briefly delivered his people from bondage with his sacrifice, Jesus with his sacrifice and death did so forever. From Jesus' genesis to his exodus to his baptism in the Jordan to his forty days in the wilderness, Jesus was identifying himself with the covenant people. He was the full embodiment of Israel. Thus, when Joseph and Mary took Jesus and went to Egypt fleeing from Herod, it brought to a climax the work of deliverance that began in the Exodus of Israel and was now coming to completion in the Exodus of Jesus. That's why Matthew can say "this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet." But where the first Israel, God's son, broke the covenant and deserved God's wrath, when God beholds his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, He says in Matthew, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."

Theologically this is a fairly tightknit argument showing how Jesus fulfills all that Israel should have been. However, a wise priest once told me, you really are advancing in praying the Psalms when you can replace "Israel" with your name. So what about us personally and our individual lives? We are all on a spiritual journey whether we realize it or not and our spiritual journey can only end happily in union with our Creator, with God. So what is it that we long for on earth? Because once we die, there is only one thing that we can long for, that can fulfill us... God and union with Him! The catch is that if we ignore our relationship with God on earth, our chances for union with Him in the next phase become unlikely or impossible.

So what fulfills us and what do we long for? Even spousal union, as good as it can be, is a shadowy picture of heavenly bliss and at best points to the ecstasy that we will have in union with God. At Christmas, the lights, decorations, and smells also create something beautiful. That beauty expands our hearts, and makes us long for fulfillment. It can make us long for traditions we had in childhood. It can make us long for a return of the pure wonder we used to have as innocent children. Perhaps one of the more painful aches comes when we long for the presence of loved ones who are no longer with us.

These yearnings were placed in our hearts by our Creator to make us long for heaven. When we die on earth, it is not lights out. Our journey and our destiny is an eternal one, and it is only in union with God that all our longings will be satisfied. All of the good things on earth only point to that ultimate joy of being in heaven. During our lifetimes, we'll get tastes and glimmers of what that heavenly bliss is going to be like, but they are only meant to point us homeward, never to totally fulfill and satisfy us. That is why it is so important to not let earthly pleasures and joys overtake us in our focus of our ultimate goal which is to be in heaven with Jesus. So always keep in mind that we were made for more than what earth can provide and there will always be a deep chasm between what we experience on earth and heavenly fulfillment.