It was by faith that Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac. He offered to sacrifice his only son even though the promises had been made to him and he had been told: It is through Isaac that your name will be carried on. He was confident that God had the power even to raise the dead; and so, figuratively speaking, he was given back Isaac from the dead.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Heb 1: 1-2

Alleluia, alleluia! In the past God spoke to our fathers through the prophets; now he speaks to us through his Son. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 2: 22, 39-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

The child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom.

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

Longer form Lk 2: 22-40

A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL



Unauthorised reproduction of this bulletin prohibited. Published with ecclesiastical approval by ST PAULS PUBLICATIONS, PO Box 906, Strathfield NSW 2135. Tel 02 9394 3400 Fax 02 9394 3444. Scripture readings from the Jerusalem Bible, published and 1966, by Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Co. Inc. are used by permission of the publishers. Psalm text from The Psalms, A New Translation, © 1963, The Grail (England), HarperCollins. New translation of the Order of Mass from The Roman Missal © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved. Artwork by Sr Dorothy Woodward rsj. Layout, commentaries and illustrations © St Pauls Publications, 2023. No 2017. Website: www.stpauls.com.au

Breaking Open the Word

FAMILY TREASURE

What a treasured gift is a child, especially one

longed for. In the story of Abram and Sarah

we see how bereft they are to have no heir, no

child, yet God gifts them Isaac. The Gospel

tells us of another couple, Mary and Joseph,

who also have a child gifted by God, Jesus.

They "stood and wondered about the things

that were said about him [Jesus]." While both

of these sets of parents and their sons had a

much larger role than many, let us not lose

sight of the sacredness of family: the ability to

bring a life into the world and to nurture that

The invitation on this feast of the Holy Family

is to reflect on family - our own family, those

around us and in our world. Families come

in all shapes and sizes. The Holy Family is

centred on Jesus and our families, centred

on Christ, grow in holiness and love, face

challenges together and are held in God's care.

Parents and carers can identify with Mary and

Joseph wondering and worrying about their

son. A child raised in a loving environment

has the opportunity to thrive and to grow

into their full potential. The treasure of a

family is not limited to the nuclear family

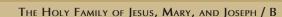
but to the extended relationships through all

of its members, centred on Christ, forming a

community where all can thrive in faith and

love whatever might come.

life to fullness.



FIRST READING

Gen 15: 1-6; 21: 1-3

THE SAVING WORD

A reading from the book of Genesis.

Your own son shall be your heir.

The word of the Lord was spoken to Abram in a vision, 'Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great'.

'My Lord,' Abram replied 'what do you intend to give me? I go childless . . .' Then Abram said, 'See, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir'. And then this word of the Lord was spoken to him, 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be of your own flesh and blood'. Then taking him outside he said, 'Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants' he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified.

The Lord dealt kindly with Sarah as he had said, and did what he had promised her. So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the time God had promised. Abraham named the son born to him Isaac, the son to whom Sarah had given birth.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 104: 1-6, 8-9. R. vv. 7, 8

- **R**. The Lord remembers his covenant for ever.
- 1. Give thanks to the Lord, tell his name, / make known his deeds among the peoples. / O sing to him, sing his praise; / tell all his wonderful works! **R**.
- 2. Be proud of his holy name, / let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice. / Consider the Lord and his strength; / constantly seek his face. **R**.



31 DECEMBER 2023

- 3. Remember the wonders he has done, / his miracles, the judgements he spoke. / O children of Abraham, his servant, / O sons of the Jacob he chose. R.
- 4. He remembers his covenant for ever, / his promise for a thousand generations, / the covenant he made with Abraham, / the oath he swore to Isaac. **R**.

SECOND READING Heb 11: 8, 11-12, 17-19

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

The faith of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac.

It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going.

It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man, and one who was already as good as dead himself, more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.

Dr Rosemary Canavan