

Holy Family 2014

The feast of the Holy Family continues the season of Christmas in the Church. The mystery of the Word made flesh becomes a lived reality in the family life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. As a young Jewish boy, Jesus and his parents are required to fulfil the precepts of the Law of Moses. Jesus grows up in a religious household coming to understand the religious customs and traditions of the law and the prophets. The mystery of the incarnation reminds us that Jesus belongs to a family, a place, a culture and people. He grows up in a local area, in a family like ours, and his parents go through all the ups and downs of family life that we know ourselves and that have not changed much over the years.

At our Christmas celebrations, the themes of light, joy and peace were uppermost in my mind this year. I was conscious of these themes here in the parish, celebrating with my family and friends and reflecting on the year just passed. At Christmas, I was particularly taken by an image Queen Elizabeth used in her Christmas message. Reflecting on the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I, the Queen mentioned that at the height of hostilities, the warring sides laid down their weapons and in the cold evening air of winter, the familiar tune of Silent Night could be heard. At the height of war, peace and goodwill reigned for a short period despite the fact that the military hierarchy had objected to this initiative. Peace and hope can reign even in the midst of conflict and bloodshed.

In an impassioned Christmas Day address, Pope Francis prayed for peace in the troubled parts of the world. He all called for more tenderness and compassion in daily life especially when the stresses of life make us impatient, intolerant and uncaring. Peace, patience, tenderness, compassion. The birth of Jesus reminds us that these are the great gifts God bestows on his people. He is not a harsh and ruthless God but a God of mercy, tenderness, compassion, peace and joy. The pope continues to call all believers and even non-believers, men and women of goodwill, to continue returning to this font of goodness. In our families and communities, in our workplace and relationships, we need much bigger doses of goodness, hope, joy, unity, tenderness and peace.

The feast of the Holy Family reminds us that God is faithful to his promise, God continues to walk with his people, God continues to fill our hearts with that faith that gave life to Sarah and Abraham. Because the mystery of the Word made flesh is not just a nice idea, or a theory or a theological concept. The Word who is Jesus took flesh in the reality of our lives, world and our families. The Word comes to change our hearts and lives and to fill us with the life and goodness of God.

In this celebration of the Eucharist, let us pray for a genuine spirit of faith that continues the work of hope, light, joy, goodness and peace long after the Christmas decorations are pulled down and the presents put away. Let us continue to open our hearts to the great gift of the birth of Jesus that touches our lives, transforms our world and renews our faith in the God who never ceases to call us out of darkness and into his own wonderful light.