



SUNDAY 27 DECEMBER 2020

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

Feast of the Holy Family: Luke 2: 22-40

“Their family’s not like mine”, Debbie told me with some energy. “It’s no use asking me to follow Jesus, Mary and Joseph in our house, I’m not sure how such perfect people lived from day to day. Their standards are way beyond us lot.” She echoed something that had annoyed me for years. We don’t know what it was like in their home in Nazareth.

But they were a family. They had plans to make, money to earn, they had to care for one another. In short, they didn't go round gazing piously to the skies or saying prayers all day. They coped with the ups and downs of life, loved one another and had fun, dare you believe.

The beauty of today’s feast lies in God’s Son being born as one of us, growing up as a kid among other kids learning a trade from Joseph and knowing people in the ordinary and complex ways we all do. God is not playing at being one of us. He is so totally human that we now measure our ways of living out our humanity by the ways he expressed his. By studying his public ministry we can see how his care for people in need may give us an insight into his home life, blessed by God.

Part of our difficulty is getting our heads around how Mary’s sinless life and Jesus’ divinity showed in day to day living. We speculate, of course, but aside from a wonderful kindness and compassion, we’re making personal assumptions. That’s OK - but we need to keep grounded.

Mary and Joseph took their new born baby to the temple in Jerusalem to comply with the Law of Moses and to consecrate Jesus to the Lord, as required for the first-born male child in any family. Here they meet two wonderful saintly characters, Simeon and Anna.

Just as your imagination tries to picture the Holy Family’s interaction at home, how do you portray Simeon and Anna? If you were making a film of this, what’s in your mind’s eye? What do these two elderly people look like? They’ve been around for a long time. They are godly individuals. Get in on the scene. Picture the look on Simeon’s face as he instinctively realises who has just walked in. See him holding Jesus. Look at his face, his eyes, his whole body language. Anna appears, and is likewise graced with understanding. Betcha she speaks with Mary and Joseph, and gets to hold the baby too.

Try and feel what they felt - read the story from the inside. These two people are carriers of a message to two new parents with an awesome responsibility. They affirm that the child is the one sent by God for the salvation of all nations - an affirmation not unlike the uplifting message the shepherds brought to Bethlehem about the babe in swaddling clothes being Christ the Lord. But Simeon talks to Mary of the cost of it all. Her and God’s child will be rejected and she will feel it as any mother does.

Parents recognise some of the strains in this Gospel story - because this is family stuff . Believe in your family. God does.



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Pope Francis on justice

Hunger and thirst are intense experiences, since they involve basic needs and our instinct for survival. There are those who desire justice and yearn for righteousness with similar intensity. Jesus says that they will be satisfied, for sooner or later justice will come. We can cooperate to make that possible, even if we may not always see the fruit of our efforts.

Jesus offers a justice other than that of the world, so often marred by petty interests and manipulated in various ways. Experience shows how easy it is to become mired in corruption, ensnared in the daily politics of *quid pro quo*, where everything becomes business. How many people suffer injustice, standing by powerlessly while others divvy up the good things of this life. Some give up fighting for real justice and opt to follow in the train of the winners. This has nothing to do with the hunger and thirst for justice that Jesus praises.

True justice comes about in people’s lives when they themselves are just in their decisions; it is expressed in their pursuit of justice for the poor and the weak. While it is true that the word ‘justice’ can be a synonym for faithless to God’s will in every aspect of our life, if we give the word too general a meaning, we forget that it is shown especially in justice towards those who are most vulnerable. ‘Seek justice, correct oppressions; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow’

Hungering and thirsting for righteousness, that is holiness.

- Rejoice and be Glad, paras 77-79