

29th December 2019 (The Holy Family, Year A)

Ecclesiasticus 3:2-6,12-14; Psalm 127(128):1-5; Colossians 3:12-21; Matthew 2:13-15,19-23.

'Let the message of Christ find a home with you.'

This Sunday, the first Sunday after Christmas, we are invited to reflect on family life. We are invited to look at the holy family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and also on life in our own family. In the words of Paul, how can we let the message of Christ find a home with us?

As the gospel story narrates, it is not easy to live the life of God. Even as a young child, the son of God was persecuted by the authorities of his time. Matthew tells us how, guided by divine providence through messages by angels, the holy family first had to go into exile in Egypt and then settle in Nazareth. (According to Matthew, at the time of Jesus' birth, the holy family lived in Bethlehem, in Galilee, they only decided to move to Nazareth after their return from Egypt.)

While Matthew depicts Jesus as a Moses-figure who will now save his people from sin, he also shows us that the holy family is constantly being obedient to God's will, as explained to them by the angels. It is not easy to live the life of refugees, yet Joseph had the courage to take his family into Egypt and then to Nazareth for their safety!

We too are children of God; how do we, like Jesus and the holy family, make sure that we obey God's will for us? How do we make sure that Christ's word does find a home in us? We are not spoken to by an angel, but God does speak to us through other means. The term '*angel*' in Greek means '*messenger*.' What messengers and messages does God send us in our life today?

In the second reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians, Paul tells the Christians to respect one another. Family life is built on respect and love. Without respect and love we cannot live together as a family. In order to be able to build something together, we each have to give up something of who we are. We need to learn to listen carefully to each other and try to understand the way the other person is seeing things. In discussion we can then arrive at agreement or at least a compromise.

Above all we need love! Love is not a feeling of attraction towards another person, but a commitment to go out of one's way in order to build something stronger and better. Love leads us to let go of who we are and into a deep relationship with another person. When husband and wife decide to come together and love each other totally, they can then give life to other members in their family. While children are the first fruit of love between husband and wife, their love will also extend to people around them.

In and through this love, husband, wife and children become God's messengers to each other. God speaks to us through the people around us and through the circumstances we encounter. God's voice is not only heard through formal prayers or at Church, but also when we let go of our wishes and listen to the needs of those around us with respect and humility. Paul invites husbands, wives and children each to reach out and to respect one another.

Let us continue to build God's holy family in the world we live in today.

.... Mario