



The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

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Homily at Mass Feast of the Holy Family Year A – 29 December 2019

The Holy Family – who is that? The 3 figures at the heart of the Nativity scene – the infant Jesus, his arms extended in welcome beckoning us to share in his love, a sign of his arms outstretched as we see on the Cross. Either side of Jesus in the manger are Mary and Joseph, both rapt in adoration and silence and wonder at God’s great gift, his eternal Son, new born in our flesh. Jesus, Mary, Joseph: this is the Holy Family who have Jesus at the centre: They could say of their family life which began in the cave at Bethlehem, sought refuge in Egypt, and took root and grew at Nazareth, their family life and their home was all an experience of “God with-us”. God the Son cradled in Mary’s arms, and fed at her breast. God the Son who went to school with the other children of the village, attended Saturday Synagogue and celebrated all the Jewish festivals leading to the Passover celebrated xxx with the Apostles on the night of his arrest leading to the Cross.

God the Son who supported Mary when St Joseph died, and learnt the trade of a carpenter – he worked with his hands, the same hands which healed the sick, instituted the Eucharist, and received the nails of the Cross.

A Holy Family – what is that? With memories of our family celebration of Christmas still fresh in our minds, let’s give that some thought.

Priests count it an honour and a privilege to visit their parish families. At this time of year it is a real joy to knock on a door and first of all see the wreath – a sign of Christian hope, a sign of eternity. And then coming inside, there is always a Christmas tree. But one thing I am always glad to see in our homes is the family Nativity set. This is a clear sign that this family has not forgotten what Christmas really is – it is the feast of God born among us, God making his home in our homes and families.

In the midst of everything else, even the tinsel and baubles, the wrapping paper and Christmas cards, Christmas songs and carols, this family has opened the doors and welcomed Christ, his holy Mother and St Joseph with the poverty of the shepherds, the humility of the Magi, and the wonder of the Angels.

Speaking at Confirmation Bishop Elliott always encourages families to begin their Christmas celebration with a prayer – grace before meals. Watching all those food shows on television does it ever strike you that with all their quality products and cooking skills, there is never a word of thanks, a prayer? What happens in your family – even if you are eating by yourself? Does your family have the habit of grace before meals? Many do – congratulations! And many families in our parish keep the habit of family prayer – perhaps the Rosary. Many parents keep the habit of blessing their children with the sign of the Cross on their forehead as they kiss them good night. To all of you I say well done! Thank you! Keep it up!

One of my nephews has just completed his first year at school. He's certainly learnt a lot, but his mum and dad and his teachers know he has a long way to go – learning, growing, discovering the world. He's been very excited at all the presents he's received from Santa. But his mum told me that she also asked him, what are the things that you are grateful for? Yes, the love of others in the gifts he's received, his family – all of us gathered together on Christmas and Boxing Day, and all the opportunities mum and dad give him in their home and family life – love, care, feeling safe, the happy things of every day.

Please God there are the sorts of things you and I count as so many blessings from the hands of a Father whose Son is Divine Love made flesh, God with-us-today.