

Feast of the Holy Family. Year.C. 28/29 December 2019.

If you were at one of the Masses I celebrated at Christmas you'll recall that I spoke of the ordinary folk, the little ones, who had and still do have, the inner space and freedom to hear God's call, adapting themselves to what God asks. They're in it for what they can do for others and offer to the world. Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men were like this, unlike the mighty, rich and well connected King Herod who was only in it for himself and what he could get out of the world and the rest of us.

It was because of Herod's impending murderous purge of the children of Bethlehem that Joseph, ever the listener to God, packed up his small family, taking them in flight to safety in Egypt where they stayed until Herod had died. Pope Francis says that today we're living not during an era or Epoch of change but during a change of Epoch; not so much in a time of change, but right within a changing of the times. On this point, as on many others, I agree with our Pope.

Thankfully, in God's wisdom, the Holy Family lived in just such a changing of the times. The secret to making it through such times as ours is their gift to all of us; the flexibility to adapt ourselves to the new life emerging as we make our farewells to the familiar, old, passing ways. This is only possible if we, like Joseph and Mary, give our keenest attention to God, keeping a firm focus on the Light that is their Son, Jesus our Lord. Without this guiding light we'll quickly find ourselves becoming confused, lost, self-centred and stricken with fear and sadness.

The shepherds heard God's news out in the darkness of their fields. They listened to the Angel's incredible message of joy, hope, freedom and new life for everyone, seeing then the new born King wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. So, too, the wise men who followed the Star for countless steps through the deserts until it led them to the loving warmth of the stable where they gave their homage and gifts to the Lord.

When everything around us is changing, as it is, these things remain. They are the solid ground upon which we can build, welcoming our future with wise discernment and a hope that's based on the unchangeable truth of God's love and presence with us. This is how God comes to us in these days of ours, as God always has; Emmanuel, a child to be welcomed, seen, held, loved and treasured.

This little one is the future of our families and of the family of God, the Church. He'll go with us on the journey, even in flight to foreign lands and the uncertainty of strange places until He guides us back to our new place, a fresh beginning, our own Nazareth and our lasting home.