

Homily. Feast of the Holy Family. Year. C. 28/29 December 2024.

The 1st reading is about gratefulness, commitment and sacrifice. Hannah, who had longed and prayed for a child she thought she could never have, offered her son, Samuel, back to God's service; a living gift to her, received, cared for and sacrificed back in thanksgiving to the Lord.

The 2nd reading is also all about gifts given, received and responded to. John tells us to think about the gift of God's love lavished on us when God made us God's children and family. God's loving of us is ongoing forever. It calls us to respond by loving God and others, or as the writer puts it; We are to believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son and love others in the way and manner of his love for us.

In a unique and special story Luke tells us about the parents of Jesus and how they made the yearly trek to Jerusalem for the great Passover feast. He goes on to outline a time of adolescent rebellion by Jesus and the stress and anxiety this caused Mary and Joseph. After being found 3 days later, much hurt and at their wits end over what their son had done, Jesus spoke of his early understanding of his mission, what he called his Father's affairs. Nevertheless, chided for his actions, he went home and settled back in under their guidance.

All families has experiences like these; moments of gift, sacrifice and thanksgiving; times of love and service to each other and to the wider community; hard days of challenge, worry, distress and rectification.

The Word of God tells us that the Holy Family were the same and that holy people have always worked their way through these events. Even

more, the message is that these moments, times and days are the very paths through which our holiness becomes secured.

Everything I've said applies equally to our Parish and our belonging to the Church, our bigger family faith. The Eucharist that sits at our heart is all about gifts given by God, received by us and responded to with thanks, commitment and loving service, in times of sorrow and of joy. This is the way of our everyday holiness, our way of living the life of the Lord now.

May the God of all good gifts grace us to keep going forward, working out our holiness in all of the ups and downs of our ordinary, but in many ways quite extraordinary family and community lives. May God bless us as God always does for those who dwell in his house and walk in his ways.

Finally, on this Feast day, we remember people who have now gone from our sight; parents and grandparents, children and relatives, friends and fellow parishioners, all of them we hope with us in this holy moment as we offer ourselves to God. We pray, like Hannah, Mary and Joseph did, that they have found an eternal home in God's house and family in heaven, their holiness confirmed, their journey completed. One day, may we join them in the peace, joy and love that never ends.