

December 27, 2015

Feast of the Holy Family

Son, your father and I have been looking for you. Why have you done this to us?

O God, create life where there is death, put flesh of action on bare-boned intentions, light fires against the midnight of indifference, and throw bridges of care across canyons of loneliness so that all of creation can look upon all families and see that they are very good.

A Story of Jesus' Holy Family
as told by our imagination

“At the time of this Gospel story Jesus is twelve years old. The family had gone up to Jerusalem for Passover. Many villages were represented in the great procession to Jerusalem.

“Soon it was over, caravans reassembling and putting everything in order. The procession formed a huge family, so everyone knew their child would be with friends or relatives when not by their side. Then the sun began to hide beneath its horizon and families came together for sleep. ‘Joseph, I think we should look for Jesus. He is probably talking with his friends as usual.’ Little did she know. No relative had seen him anywhere. Last sighted the day before.

“Mary’s heart broke into pieces. What mother on earth cannot imagine the feeling: missing child - my child. Gone! The ache and urgency of their rush back to Jerusalem was far more difficult than the pregnant trip they had made twelve years before to Bethlehem. They scoured the cramped city. Day One: looking everywhere, no sign of him. They sleep an hour or so. Day Two: searching everywhere, asking everyone, following every trail. He was not there. Images of kidnapping, slavery, terrible accidents, and so many more hovered just beneath their consciousness.

“Day Three. To the temple, this time daring to enter the utterly private rooms where teachers and Rabbis debated minor and major points of scripture. No regular people were allowed there, especially poor travelers. And there, perfectly at home for these three days he sat, the twelve year old, questioning the teachers and answering them. Luke is indicating that Jesus has successfully made the transition into the male world.

“Male maturity in the Mediterranean world entailed becoming liberated from female control. A man wrestled throughout life with the tension between leaving female company behind yet continuing to nurture the strong bond with his mother. Jesus struggles to trade his mother’s tutelage for Joseph’s. But not informing Joseph, Mary, or any friend or relative about his intention, in this group-oriented culture, such independent and individualistic behavior is irresponsible, disrespectful, and shameful. Even the Holy Family had its rough moments.”

A Story of a Holy Family in Tacoma

as told by Fr. Gary Smith, SJ, who ran an inner-city drop-in center

"Terry and Sarah asked me a year ago to officiate at their wedding. I told them to see me in a year, and if they are still together, then I would consider it. Street liaisons are notoriously fast and very unstable. For a whole year, they were on the streets until he found work as a mechanic. Sarah is a gentle woman who suffered brain damage at birth. The disability left her partially handicapped in speech and in some of her leg movements. I like Sarah and Terry; I like what I see as they express their care for each other.

"So the grand wedding took place in the little apartment where they lived. The apartment was divided in half by borrowed metal chairs, simulating an aisle. Sarah made her glorious entrance from the kitchen. In the front row sat her foster parents, both elderly, both deaf, both beaming. As I was asking the questions of the marriage vows and the happy couple was responding, Sarah, her free hand behind her, was furiously 'signing' everything that was being said in order for her parents - intently watching her hands - could follow the whole ceremony. When I realized what was going on, I started to choke. After the formal part of the evening, we all adjourned to the kitchen for all the free cake and 7-Up we could eat and drink. It was a wedding as tender in its humanity as any in which I have participated. I hear from them still, and that same tenderness still characterizes their marriage."

A Story of a Holy Family in East Los Angeles

as told by Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ, who founded a Gang Rehabilitation Center in east L.A.

"I remember one night I was walking the streets, and I see this 18 year-old kid, Luigi, I know run up to a car and make a sale. He sells crack cocaine. He comes walking into the light, counting his cash. He sees me and gets very embarrassed and says, 'Sorry.' I choose not to say anything about the drug sale. I say, 'What are you doing out here, you know where you should be right now. You should be up in the apartment with your girl friend who is nine months pregnant and ready to burst. I heard on the grapevine that she had a false alarm last night and went to the hospital.' It wasn't her time, but - 'you need to be there with your girlfriend.' He said, 'Oh, you know, my mother-in-law is up there.' I go, 'What do you mean your mother-in-law is up there?' Don't tell me you're not going to be there when this baby is born.' And he goes, 'Ya know, to tell the truth, I don't think I can do that.' And I say, 'What do you mean you don't think you can do that?' I'm getting all worked up. 'You need to be there, whether you want to or not.'

Shortly after that he comes to show me his new son. And I ask him, 'Were you there when he was born?' 'No,' he answers, looking a bit sheepish. And I say, 'What do you mean you weren't there?' And he says, 'I was there in the waiting room at the hospital, and waiting and waiting. And suddenly this nurse comes, and she says, 'Come on, it's time.' And we go running down the hall. She puts these gloves on me and this dress on me and this little hat on my head and this mask across my face, and we run down the hall. And we get to this door, and she opens it and pushes me in, and there I see this birth happening right there, with this little head coming out. And I say I have to leave. And the nurse pulls me back in, and I say, 'I can't stay in this room.' And she says, 'What do you mean, you can't you say in this room?' And I say, 'Because this is

ain't my woman'."

Families are holy when, like Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, and Terry and Sarah, and Luigi, remain faithful to each other in all their struggles, joys, and laughter.

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This is feast is about you

Happy Holy Family Feast Day!