

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (Cycle B) Homily

St. William, Champion | December 7, 2020

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 | Col 3:12-21 | Lk 2:22-40

Deacon Robert Mintus

What is it that makes Christmas so special? As I get older, I think that it only confirms what I first suspected as a child: it's spending time with those you love. I remember my Uncle Joe, who came to visit us every year at Christmas, and the first time that he wasn't able to be with us. As my children have begun to grow up and have begun to scatter across the country, and my in-laws and dad are no longer with us, it only drives home the point that Christmas is about sharing our love with those around us.

For many people this year, Christmas doesn't seem to be Christmas, as we have had to limit our gatherings to protect each other. My heart goes out to a number of family and friends who will not be able to share the holiday with friends and loved ones because they may potentially spread the coronavirus. But on the other hand, if any good has come out of the pandemic, it may be that we've developed an appreciation for the chance to gather with those we love that we have taken for granted for so many years.

One of the challenges that we have faced in the midst of all the social distancing is about relationships... In the last year, there have been a lot fewer hugs, a lot less kisses, and even a lot less handshakes. It is hard to show love for others when we have to closely limit what we can do. Love is not just a feeling or an emotion that exists by itself – it has to give way to an action. It's hard to show love when the best thing you can do is to wear a mask to protect each other. It's hard living in isolation.

Through sin, isolation came to separate God and man. But over the years, God reached out to communicate with man. For thousands of years, God spoke through prophets. Over time, God wanted to have a closer relationship. So he made the ultimate choice to be able to share his love by becoming human just like us.

This is the love that we celebrate today. It's the love that enables us to stick by others for better or for worse. It's at the center of family life, and it is what made the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph a holy one.

I remember the story of a young class of children who were celebrating the school's annual Christmas pageant. It was a purely secular theme, lots of songs about winter and Santa. During the final number, those in the front row—center stage—held up large letters, one by one, to spell out the title of the song. As the class would sing “C is for Christmas,” a child would hold up the letter C. Then, “H is for Happy,” and on and on, until each child holding up his portion had presented the complete message, “Christmas Love.”

The performance was going smoothly, until suddenly, they all noticed a problem: a small, quiet, girl in the front row was holding the letter “M” upside down—totally unaware her letter “M” appeared as a “W”.

The audience of 1st through 6th graders snickered at this little one's mistake. But she had no idea they were laughing at her, so she stood tall, proudly holding her “W”.

Although many teachers tried to shush the children, the laughter continued until the last letter was raised, and then, they all saw it together. A hush came over the audience and eyes began to widen.

In that instant, everyone understood the reason they were there; why they celebrated the holiday in the first place; why, even in the chaos, there was a purpose for their festivities. For when the last letter was held high, the message read loud and clear: “CHRISTWAS LOVE”.

This Christmas season, let us remember that it is the love of God in Christ that makes this time special. Let us allow that love to permeate our homes and our actions, so that we may make our family a holy one.