



Bringing Home the Word

The Presentation of the Lord (A)
February 2, 2020

The Fulfillment of Our Hopes

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Parents who bring a new baby home bring also their hopes and dreams for the child. At the very least, we hope the child will be happy and healthy and will have a life that is better than ours. From there, we may harbor a secret hope that the child might create the cure for some disease, write a prize-winning novel, or bring peace to the world.

I did all of those things, and I also prayed I wouldn't mess things up too badly. That was a secret hope I didn't share with our children until they were much older and it already seemed I hadn't done too much damage.

Sunday Readings

Malachi 3:1-4

And the lord whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple;
The messenger of the covenant whom you desire.

Hebrews 2:14-18

Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Luke 2:22-40 or 2:22-32

[Simeon said,] "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation."

I can only imagine what Mary and Joseph thought when they brought Jesus to the Temple. Even though the angel Gabriel had revealed their son's identity, did they look at him and see the refiner's fire of Malachi's prophecy?

It's possible, but I think they saw him more as their beloved child. The angel Gabriel told Mary that her son would "be great...[and] the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32), but did she know everything that meant? That's hard to see when your child is an infant in your arms.

What we know is this: Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, and two people who had been waiting all their lives for a sign from God took that child into their arms and into their hearts and saw in him the answer to their prayers and the fulfillment of their hopes.

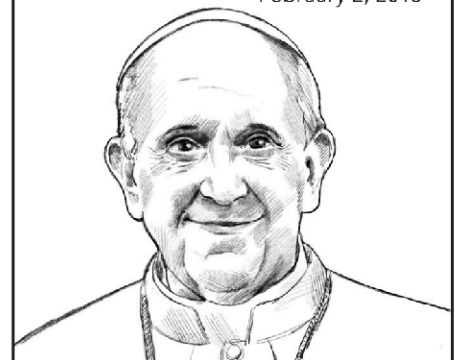
In that moment, Mary and Joseph could simply hold their breath and pray for the grace and strength to raise this child of God—and to hold their own hope out to him. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

In the Temple...Mary and Joseph find the roots of their faith, for faith is not something learned from a book, but the art of living with God, learned from the experience of those who have gone before us. The two young people, in meeting two older people [Simeon and Anna], thus find themselves.

—Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, February 2, 2018



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Do you cherish every child as belonging to God?
- How have you made your world better?

Honoring Our Parents

By Kathy Coffey

God's Fourth Commandment reads, "Honor your father and your mother..." (Exodus 20:12). What nugget of wisdom does this commandment teach us? Today some parents and children are estranged; others wish their parents were alive so they could honor them. But the following story shows how delightfully some children still honor their parents.

Jan celebrated her sixtieth birthday with friends, far from her children living in five different states. "No gifts," she had told her kids. "All I need are memories of you." Then the postal service delivered a special box. Within it were sixty slips of paper on which Jan's children had written sixty special memories. She read and cherished each one, mixing laughter and tears.

Why honor our parents? In the world of the Bible and in good homes today, parents provide images of trust, hope, and serenity that enable the young to face formidable obstacles. To their children they convey the message, spoken or unspoken, "You are loved. You are wonderful."

All humans are constantly making the passage from the known to the unknown. Parents who have endured disappointment, even tragedy, can help their offspring travel that passage with dignity. "We've made mistakes," they say,

"We've lost jobs, health, or our dearest loves. But it didn't kill us. Something in people endures, continues to trust, and moves forward in confidence."

Related Roles

Furthermore, parents are memory keepers. When their children hit snags, they remind them what glorious people they are. And if humor, perspective, or packages of goodies can lighten the load, they contribute those, too. The wisest parents honor their children in turn. They count on their children's good sense to pilot them through difficulties, so they



restrain the "free advice." They clarify the boundaries of their role: providing safe harbors, but holding the ropes loosely. They encourage children to explore God's beautiful world, not burdening them with unnecessary anxiety. They recognize the arenas where the young have more expertise, inviting them to shine there.

Many parents struggle with handing on their faith to a generation that seems unenthusiastic at best. There, too, honor comes in. Realizing that the gift of faith, no matter how important, cannot be coerced or controlled, parents can follow the advice of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Agonizing over her sons' shenanigans, she once said, "What's a mother to do but pray and dote, pray and dote?"

If the roles of parent and child seem too idealized, we need only look to Jesus

and his mother and behold them as our role models. (Unfortunately, Scripture records little of Jesus' relationship with Joseph.)

Learning from Jesus and Mary

The wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12) provides the perfect example of their honoring each other. Mary wisely tells Jesus of the need: "They have no wine." Then she backs off. She trusts his instincts to resolve the crisis.

Despite his reservations ("My hour has not yet come"), Jesus in turn honors his mother. Whether he was responding to her, or to the couple's dire need, we may never know. Despite the exhaustion and pain of his passion, Jesus continues to honor Mary, making sure even from the cross that his beloved disciple would continue to care for her (John 19:26-27).

In Jesus' day, women with no son or husband for protection often became desperate beggars. Knowing that sad reality, Jesus makes sure that John will take her into his own home. Saint Ignatius imagined that the first appearance of Jesus after the resurrection, although not recorded in Scripture, must surely have been to Mary.

As parents and children who follow Jesus, we are called to do likewise. +



Lord, you dwell in the depth of my being. May your Spirit help me to seek and to know you with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength.


—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 3-8

Monday, Weekday:
2 Sm 15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13 / Mk 5:1-20
Tuesday, Weekday: 2 Sm 18:9-10, 14b, 24-25a, 30—19:3 / Mk 5:21-43
Wednesday, St. Agatha:
2 Sm 24:2, 9-17 / Mk 6:1-6

Thursday, St. Paul Miki and Companions:
1 Kgs 2:1-4, 10-12 / Mk 6:7-13
Friday, Weekday:
Sir 47:2-11 / Mk 6:14-29
Saturday, Weekday:
1 Kgs 3:4-13 / Mk 6:30-34

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