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**BULLETIN C 5 – 26TH DECEMBER 2021
THE HOLY FAMILY**



My dear brothers and sisters,

May Jesus be reborn in your heart and life during **Christmas 2021** and every day of the **New Year 2022** May He radiate His presence from within you as sharing love, unconditional forgiveness, humble service, a compassionate heart, and overflowing generosity. May the Holy Babe of Bethlehem bless you with health in body and soul and grant you a peaceful and blessed New Year. I assure you of my special prayers during all the Christmas Masses and every day in the New Year.

God bless you all,

Fr. John

MASS TIMES

Sun 26 Holy Family Sunday 1000 Sung Mass for all parishioners

NB. No Masses during this week

Sun 2 2nd Sunday of Christmas 1000 Sung Mass for all parishioners
1800 Mass Gerrald Doyle (RIP)

GOSPEL REFLECTION

An exhibition of artworks from the Renaissance in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge contained knives from a rich Italian house with musical notes engraved on them. What were the notes for? It was to enable the singing of grace before meals. Presumably most people would know the simple tunes used, but the design was there to make a point. The Christian family is just as much a sacred gathering as a service in church. In fact it is more so in one respect. People gather in church of their own free will, even though they are called by the Holy Spirit. They then disperse. We can gather at any church. The family is different. It is partly a matter of choice for the husband and wife, but it is not a matter of choice for the children. The family is the first church, and even if we may separate ourselves from the family by marriage or religious vows, we never lose our responsibility for each other in family.

Jesus was born into a family because this is part of the human good. Some people are deprived of that human good, but Christ was not, because he is the perfect human being. His deprivation would come from the persecution and unbelief of others, but it would not come from human dysfunction, as happens so often. This means that he offers us grace as part of a human family. Where he is, Joseph and Mary are not far away. We too need to offer prayer as part of the family, whatever sort it might be, because this is part of our own perfection, to acknowledge how much we are shaped by God through other people.

The word “person” may not sound like a theological word, still less the words that derive from it, such as “personality” or “personally”, yet it has its origin in Christian theology. It was adapted from the Latin word for “mask” as used by actors in ancient drama so that the actors could portray a multitude of characters. It was used to describe the persons of the Trinity and applied to human beings and angels as created persons. Person means the fundamental reality of each one of us, whatever we may be. Human weakness, or illness such as dementia, can limit our ability to act as free persons. Newborn children are limited in their ability to make decisions for themselves. There are limitations of nature, but nature cannot destroy the fact of personhood.

Children grow up and become more capable of making decisions for themselves, which is often difficult for their parents to accept. The story of Jesus in the Temple is precisely about that fact: that in his humanity Christ had to grow up to become able to fulfil his mission. This story might seem to suggest that Mary and Joseph were unaware of his divinity, but it is more a case that they were coming to terms with his humanity. A real humanity is always limited and, by accepting these limitations, the Son of God was deepening his humanity. If his Godhead had overwhelmed his humanity, the redemption would have been imperfect. Instead Jesus is truly dependent on his family and ultimately humanity as a whole, even to the point of death. Only at the resurrection is our personhood fully affirmed, where all redeemed humanity will be about their Father’s business.

The family is not an absolute good. Sometimes we may have to break away from our family to avoid sin. Yet the desire for good family life is an absolute. Here on earth nature often binds us to our families, but our love has to go beyond those bounds. This is not a contradiction but a larger truth, the truth of heaven, which swallows up the lesser truth of family life on earth.

So the Gospels speak of the importance of family life, with the story of the prodigal son where the love of the father is the image of the love of God. Yet Jesus also says, “If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple.” The paradox is resolved in the Holy Family, who are for each other but where all three keep in mind first their relationship to God, and from this fidelity a greater unity is forged.