

Homily Notes

Nov 1, 2017: All Saints Day

Rev 7:2-4,9-14; 1 Jn 3:1-3; Mt 5:1-12a

Being Saints for Today

G.K. Chesterton once said that the greatest tragedy in the world is that of a Christian not becoming a saint. The whole understanding of the term saint is beginning to take a new meaning in the post-modern context: a saint is a person who is too holy to be imitable; a saint is a person whose feet are a foot above the ground and who secludes himself from the society. In fact, very few Christians strive to be saints today. What is then the significance of the All Saints Day for us?

In today's first reading from the book of Revelation, we see the vision of St. John, where he sees 1, 44,000. This number should not be taken in the literal sense, but as an indicative of the inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God and the bitter truth that though God wills that everyone to be saved, those who reject it would not be saved. John is pointing this at the Roman Emperor and the Romans who were persecuting the then Christians. In the second reading, we come to know from the First letter of St. John, what love the Father has showered upon us by letting us be called his children. We aim to be like Jesus and become like Him in his glory. Whoever treasures this hope will purify himself or herself. It is this hope that is the fuel of our faith.

The core of the entire Christian message according to many theologians is concisely expressed in the Beatitudes. The beatitudes are a challenge to the real disciples of Jesus. Like Jesus said, in Mt 7: 20, we know people by their fruits. The beatitudes are the fruits of the Christian life. It is through these, that one derives the Christian identity in his or her life. Today, we do not lead a life of seclusion but we are to be contemplatives in ac-

tion. We must have the mind of Christ in our every action. How can we, who are Christians, fail to be saints? How can we give witness to our faith in our context? How can we be saints of the modern times? Discernment in the spirit is the key.

-Bhanu Yeshwanth

Nov 2, 2017: All Souls Day

Wis 3:1-9; Romans 5:5-11; John 6:37-40

Being People of Hope

Some people tend to think that life ends with death but we Christians believe that our real life begins with death because through death we make a passage from earthly life to heavenly life with God. The church places this feast as the following of All Saints Day to show that all our departed ones are too the saints who are undeclared and they intercede for us to God. Praying for the dead is an ancient practice which we see in the holy tradition of the Catholic Church. All souls day is not a day to mourn and cry for our departed ones but the day to be grateful that after their long awaited journey of earthly life, they now can experience the salvation of God, which God promised his people as we see it in first reading. The Lord promises through the prophet Isaiah that the dead shall live, their corpses shall rise and the dwellers in the dust shall awake and sing for joy (Is 26:19). However the future life which is promised is different from the life in this world. It will be a new life in a new world where the sense of loss and grief will exist no longer.

Through this day the church gifts us with the opportunity to remember the departed, to thank God for the life that they lived with us on earth and for the eternal life that they enjoy now in heaven with God. Every Christian must be happy to enter into this new life without fear because this is the purpose for which we are living. We should not have any fear of death because we have already died with Christ in our baptism and we wait to be raised by the Risen Lord.

In the gospel Jesus clearly makes a mention that all who come to him placing their trust purely on him, their burdens will be tak-

en away. Jesus is the only resting place for all of us and the only way in and through which we can be united with our heavenly Father. God unveiled the mystery of human life through Jesus Christ and his resurrection. His resurrection is the foundation for our belief of life after death. That's why St. Paul says if Christ has not risen from the dead all his preaching would make no sense.

As we celebrate all souls day let's remind ourselves that we are a people of hope, a hope that Christ will lighten our burdens, a hope that one day we may join with our near and dear ones who have put on the name of God on their foreheads, who have joined with choirs of heaven singing and praising God always. May God help us to live our life full here on earth before we attain the life everlasting! Amen.

-John Rakesh

Nov 5, 2017: XXXI Sunday of the Year

Mal 1:14b- 2:2b, 8-10; 1 Thes 2:7b-9,13; Matthew 23:1-12

"Be Humble as Your Heavenly Father Is"

The readings of today invite us to focus on humility. Humility is one of the aspects of human living but due to our limitations, we restrict ourselves to show humility in action. Today people want to live a luxuries life; they do anything and everything to attain pleasure at any cast. But today's readings ask us to accept others with humility, because God humbled Himself when He created us in His image and likeness.

The first reading is taken from the prophet Malachi. God instructs and sends Malachi to the people of Israel the chosen one to tell them that they have broken the covenant of the lord by their immoral life that turned their blessings into mourn. And he asks them to come back to the lord who created them. In the gospel Jesus teaches us to be careful about Pharisees and scribes. Because they teach the law but they do not follow it. Rather, their aims are to hold high positions and ranks in the society, and want to be called rabbi. But Jesus tells us there is one god for all and one teacher to be called that is Jesus himself. Therefore humble yourself to turn back to the lord. As St. Paul in the second read-

ing of today says that we are happy that we humbled ourselves as children in order to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. In the same way Paul also asks us to be humble in our mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus amidst diversity and sufferings.

Dear friends, Jesus as our model has taught us to be humble. In order to save the entire world He humbled and surrendered Himself fully in the hands of His Father. We also should have the attitude of humility in our daily mission to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. As pastors of the future church let us prepare ourselves to accept the reality with humility and lead the people in God's way with humility.

-R. Prabu

Nov 12, 2017: XXXII Sunday of the Year

Wis 6:12-16; 1 Thes 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13

Keep Awake!

The main lesson that Jesus gives us today is to be alert. We must keep the flame of faith alive in our heart. This flame is lit with the oil of charity and prayer; charity performed through and for the love of God. It was a great honour for the bridesmaids to be chosen to members of the bridal party, but not all the members were ready when the Bridegroom came. Their lamps were going out of oil.

The Bible often uses the symbol of a Bride and Bridegroom to symbolize the love between God and His people; between Christ and his Church. As a Bride becomes one flesh with her Bridegroom, so Christ, the Divine Bridegroom becomes one with his Church. He sacrifices himself for her, even to the point of offering his life for her. All the members of the Church form part of that Mystical Body. In this Gospel the Church is also symbolized by the whole bridal party. We are reminded of what Christ says in another Gospel passage that many are called, but few are chosen. (cf. Mt 22:14)

The Gospel reminds us that we not saved automatically simply by being members of the Church. Unless we are striving for holiness we can't hope to enter the Kingdom of God. In his document *Dominus Iesus*, written when he was the Prefect for the

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Pope Benedict XVI teaches us the following: With the coming of the Saviour Jesus Christ, God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity (cf. Acts 17:30-31).

This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism “characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that ‘one religion is as good as another’”. If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation. However, “all the children of the Church should nevertheless remember that their exalted condition results, not from their own merits, but from the grace of Christ. If they fail to respond in thought, word, and deed to that grace, not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be more severely judged”.

One understands then that, following the Lord's command (cf. Mt 28:19-20) and as a requirement of her love for all people, the Church “proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life...(Jn 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life”.

We must keep the flame of faith alive in our hearts through prayer, reception of the sacraments and works of charity, especially towards those who are least among us, so that when Christ calls us, and we never know when that time will be, we'll be ready to enter his Eternal Kingdom to take part in the Great Wedding Feast.

-Sunny Thomas

Nov 19, 2017: XXXIII Sunday of the Year

Prov 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thes 5:1-6, Matthew 25:14-30

Come and Join in Your Master's Joy

The readings of today illustrate how the children of God must be faithful to Him. The first reading portrays that the woman who

is wise and is blessed by God. The second reading states that those who are baptized in the name of Christ are sons of light and sons of the day. Their life should be a life of light to others. The gospel reading that is “The Parable of Talents” tells us how we should be faithful to God. In this connection, the gospel mentions three attitudes required of the servants of the master.

The word ‘talent’ in Bible refers to a huge amount of money, but in our context we can understand a talent in terms of a gift or ability with which a person is endowed. For example, we can say that a person has a great talent for music or a person has a great talent for dance. The servants in the parable are none other than you and me and the master is God our Father. Thus we are all servants of God and we all have been endowed with talents in varying degrees. All these talents are God given gifts. As we find in the parable, some are given more talents and some are given less talents. But all that is asked of us is that we should make use of the talents for others.

At the end of our life, we will be asked these questions: “How did you use the gifts I gave you”? So we need to utilize our gifts fruitfully. Each time we misuse or don’t use our gifts we say no to God and life. Faithfulness consists in responding to God’s call and making ourselves worthy of God’s call by living the Good News. So, it is very important for us to spend some time in reflecting on what our unique ‘talents’ or gifts or abilities are and then to ask how and then how we should use our talents.

-Suresh S.

Nov 26, 2017: Christ the King

Ezek: 34:11-12, 15-17; 1 Cor 15:20-26, 28; Mt 25:31-46

May Your Kingdom Come

Today, we celebrate the feast of Christ the King. Jesus Christ is the King of kings. The gospel of today’s liturgy contains the parable of the last judgment. It tells us, how the Lord would separate the just people from the unjust people. In the first reading of today, we see that God is the Shepherd of all. He says “I myself will care for my sheep and watch over them.” It shows that

Israel's God is God of defender of justice and upholder of the weak. Thus He will shepherd His flock with justice. The second reading of today's liturgy of the word also speaks of Jesus' kingdom. "Then comes the end when Jesus hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." The Lord has been exalted through His resurrection therefore He will continue His work by destroying the hostile powers of Satan. Jesus will reign forever because He is the King of all universe.

The gospel of today tells us clearly, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, and then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people, one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand, and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, come, you that are blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Mt 25:31-34). Every human being of every period of history will be gathered for the last judgment. All will be judged by their works of love and mercy. We should know that God's judgment does not depend on the number of titles we possess, the amount of knowledge we have, the famous position we have acquired, the wealth we have gained rather God sees the love and mercy we have shown to our neighbors.

Today we have become so indifferent to each other and thus we are not able to experience the love of God in our lives. The works of mercy are actions and practices, which Christians consider as expectations to be fulfilled by believers, and are a means of grace. This grace will aid us in eternal happiness. Jesus possesses the kingdom of heaven. So if we want to inherit life eternal we must see Jesus in others as St. Mother Teresa saw Jesus in the destitute, poor and marginalized. We are invited to see Jesus in others. The kingdom of Jesus is charity hence we will be judged according to the work of charity we do. For Jesus will say to us; "Come you that are blessed of my father, inherit the

kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Mt 25:34-36). In the present context how do we understand this Gospel passages? Today people are hungry not only for food, but also for the Word of God; they are thirsty, not only for water, but also for justice and love: the naked, not only for clothes, but for human dignity; the homeless, not only for a shelter made of bricks, but for a heart that understands and reaches out to them. The Lord will ask each one of us how we have served Him in others. Today let us introspect ourselves how we love Jesus in our neighbors because He says “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). As we celebrate the feast of Christ the King, let us examine ourselves, whom do we give first place in our lives? If Jesus is, in the first place in our lives then we will serve Him in the poor and the needy.

Jesus Christ, my Lord and God, you are King of kings and Lord of lords. I acknowledge you as my King, the sovereign ruler of my mind, heart and will. May your Kingdom come in our hearts, in our homes and in our country! Lord, May your Kingdom come on this earth, as it is in heaven! Amen.

-Augustin Tudu

December 3, 2017: First Sunday of Advent

Is 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2-7 1 Cor 1:3-9 Mk 13:33-37

Open Your Heart to the Lord

Imagine! You are sleeping. You are dreaming. A big lion is chasing you. You try to run away and you see a tiger coming in front of you. You turn sideways, but every side you turn to, you find a ferocious animal coming after you. How can you escape? The answer is: Wake up.

By waking up one enters a whole new world of reality, different from that of the dream world. What was a huge problem in

the dream state becomes a non-issue in the waking state. Dream state concerns and priorities lose their importance and new concerns and priorities take their place. E.g., you discover that your problem is no longer how to escape from wild beasts but how to beat the morning rush and arrive early for work. We can relate to the change that occurs between a dream consciousness and a wake consciousness. A similar and even more significant change occurs when we move from a state of being spiritually asleep to that of being spiritually awake, when the soul is awake and alert to spiritual reality.

In today's gospel Jesus admonishes and encourages his followers to remain alert in the spirit. He was about to leave them for an uncertain length of time. By their faith and commitment to Jesus, his followers are like people who have roused themselves from spiritual slumber. But the time of his absence would be a time of trial for their faith life when they would be tempted to doze off. He enjoins them to remain awake and watchful so that whenever he comes to them he would find them not sleeping but watching in faith, ready to welcome him.

Today we enter into the season of advent: a time of special preparation for the coming of the Lord. Mark's portrait of the doorman watching out to open for the Lord whenever he suddenly appears is an image of what we are expected to be doing all year long but especially during the season of advent. The doorman keeps awake in order to recognize and welcome the Lord at his coming. Faith, likewise, transforms us into people who are able to recognize the Lord and willing to receive him. Recognition is crucial because the Lord does not always come in easily recognizable ways. At Bethlehem he came in the form of a newborn child and people did not recognize him. In the Parable of the Last Judgment which we heard last Sunday he said he came to people in the form of the most needy and disadvantaged of this world and many did not recognize him. But true people of faith did recognize him and serve him in these people who live in the blind-spot of society. Faith is first a way of seeing, and then a way of living.

The “wicked” who were consigned to hell in the Last Judgment were probably waiting for the final coming of the Lord and failed to recognize him in his day-to-day coming. The shocker in that parable is that Christ comes into our lives in the form of the ordinary people and events of our everyday lives. We need to be awake in faith to recognize and serve Christ in these commonplace and routine encounters since it will do us no good to recognize him on the Last Day if we have not recognized and served him day by day.

Before we conclude, let’s say a word about Jesus’ saying: “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mark 13:32). This saying can be understood literally to mean that Jesus did not know the date of the end of the world. It can also be understood as a strategy meant to discourage the disciples from further inquiry into the matter. In either case the implication for us is the same: Put an end to idle speculations regarding the Last Day. Open your eyes in faith to see God present and active in your life and in your world. Open your heart and your house to the Lord who comes to you daily in the form of the needy man or woman. This is the best way to prepare to welcome the Lord when he comes on the Last Day.

-Munachi Ezeogu, cssp

December 10, 2017: Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11; 2 Pet 3:8-14; Mk 1: 1-8

Making the Way Straight

In the gospel of today, John the Baptist, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah (40:3) was the voice that was making the way straight for the Lord. He facilitated the coming of Jesus. He was a unique harbinger who paved the way for Christ’s coming by his austere life, preaching and death.

Some 2000 years ago John’s voice was heard in the desert, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and preparing the way of the Lord. He called people for a change of heart.

John the Baptist paved the way for Christ’s coming also by

his death. The purpose of his coming was to point out Christ for others. He was a forerunner. Other prophets only foretold about Christ's coming, but John the Baptist saw Christ's coming. He was a bridge between the Old Testament and New Testament.

By our good behaviour we too can lead others to God like John the Baptist did. We being the leaders of the Church, have to ask ourselves: 'how do we pave the way for God in others' lives?' People look at us, observe us and learn from us. They learn about God from us not only from what we preach and teach them, but also from the way we behave. Our scandalous life might become the reason for the other to remain far from the church. We need to live an exemplary life which leads the other to God.

As John the Baptist fulfilled his mission by paving the way for Christ's coming, so we, too have a mission in our lives: to pave the way for God's coming into our lives and into the lives of others. God has put us here for a purpose. We need to decipher our mission and fulfil it. In its specificity, our mission may vary from individual to individual, but in its goal of facilitating the God's kingdom on this earth, it remains the same.

Advent recalls that Jesus comes again to be reborn in us. We have to be baptised by the 'stronger and greater One', so that we may bear witness to him and mould our lives according to his spirit.

The advent message of this Sunday compels us to orient our life to Christ. The Lord is coming and we have to receive him. We have to remove all the obstacles that hinder us to receive the Lord so that we all will be ready to open the doors of our hearts to Him when he comes and knocks. **-Joel R. Fernandes**

December 17, 2017: Third Sunday of Advent

Is 61: 1- 2a, 10, 11; 1 Thes 5: 16-24; Jn 1: 6-8, 19- 28

Be Prepared to Rejoice

Advent is a period, a special season, a season of genuine waiting for the Word becoming flesh (Jn 1: 14), and God coming to meet the human in the history (Immanuel) (Mt 1: 23).

The coming of this King is marked by good news of deliver-

ance; good news to the oppressed, binding the brokenhearted, liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners and the Lord's favor to all those who wait for him eagerly and faithfully. It is through an attitude of sensitivity and a word of comfort that can change the history of the family, community and society at large. This mission will require faithfulness and commitment that of the bride and the bridegroom where they rejoice in each other and as the earth is faithful to the Lord the Creator in bringing its fruits.

Not despising the words of the prophet, we are called and invited to be rejoicing because we are nearing in encounter the true light which enlighten and deliver everyone. John the Baptist witnessed to this light rejoicing acknowledging himself only as a mere voice crying in the wilderness. Can we be in our own little way become a voice that can change our community that hold fast to what is good and abstain from every form of evil? Every act of kindness moved by love needs conviction that God has loved us first which in turn will lead to peace among all.

Fulton J. Sheen once remarked, "The Christmas gift of peace was the uncoiling of the links of a triple chain that unites a person with God, then with himself, and then with his neighbor." All we need is to reconcile our self with the cosmos.

May the coming King grant us the grace to be peace loving so that each and every one of us can receive him worthily and be a faithful witness. Let us rejoice, always rejoice for He is coming into each and every one of our lives. Amen.

-C. Peingam Augustine

Dec 24, 2017: Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16 Rom 16:25-27 Lk 1:26-38

Being the Mother of Jesus

The nursery school kids were preparing a Christmas play. Little Cynthia did not like the part she was assigned to play. She wanted to change parts with her friend Monica. When the teacher asked her why, she answered, "Because it is easier to be an angel than to be the mother of Christ." The little girl is certainly right.

To be the mother of Christ is no light matter. Yet difficult as it sounds, that is exactly what we are all called to be. In fact, we could say that even though Jesus was born in Bethlehem his real desire is to be born in the hearts of believers, to be re-produced by believers.

Mother of Christ is a title we usually reserve for Mary. But Mary is mother of Christ in two senses. She is mother of Christ in the physical sense that she carried Jesus in her womb and gave birth to him. This is an unrepeatable event and an honour that no other human being could share with her. But she is also mother of Christ in a spiritual sense. In a spiritual sense the role of being mother of Christ is available to all Christians. We all, men, women and children, can and should become mothers of Christ. The idea of Christians called to be mothers of Christ is very common among Christian mystics. The Dominican priest mystic, Meister Eckhart, said that God made the human soul for her to bear the divine Son, and that when this birth happens it gives God greater pleasure than the creation of heaven and earth.

What is this spiritual motherhood of Christ and how does it happen? For the answer we need to go right back to Jesus himself. "While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, 'Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.' But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother'." (Matthew 12:46-50)

This shows that (a) Jesus expects his followers to be not only his brothers and sisters but his mothers as well, and (b) the way to be the mother of Jesus is by doing the will of God. Spiritual motherhood of Christ is attained by saying yes to God, even when God appears to demand from us what is humanly impossible, like asking Mary to be a virgin mother. To become mothers of Christ we need to make the prayer of Mary our own: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your

word” (Luke 1:38).

This prayer of Mary has been known as the world’s greatest prayer. It is the prayer that brought God down from heaven to dwell in the soul and body of a lowly young woman. It is the prayer that brought about the greatest event in human history, God becoming human in Jesus. It is a prayer that changed forever the course of human history some 2000 years ago. This prayer is so very different from what has been called the world’s most common prayer, the prayer in which we try to get God to do our will. The world’s most common prayer says, “My will be done,” whereas the world’s greatest prayer says, “Thy will be done.”

Yes, little Cynthia was right. It is not easy to be the mother of Christ. But in today’s gospel Mary shows us how. It is in hearing God’s word and saying yes to God even when God’s will seems to go against all our plans and hopes for the future. As Christmas draws near, Mary reminds us that the best Christmas, in fact the only true Christmas, is that Christ be born not in the little town of Bethlehem but in the inner sanctuary of our hearts.

-Munachi Ezeogu, cssp

December 25, 2017: Nativity of Our Lord

Isaiah 52: 7-10; Eph 1:1-6; John 1:1-18

Christmas Makes Us Humble

In this Christmas night, the Son, second person of the trinity, our lord and God, the eternal Word became small; small enough to fit into a manger. He became a child, so that the Word could be grasped by man. We call this as Incarnation. One of the truths of incarnation is that God incarnates ‘not as He is’ but as ‘He who can be grasped by man’. So he takes the nature of man leaving the nature of God, which is the greater form of humility. Because by this, He left everything, even His very existence only for us “For a child has been born for us” (Is 9:6). It is really the self-giving love of our lord Jesus, which is not only manifested on the cross but also on the birth in the manger.

In today’s Gospel we encounter the maternal love of Mary, the fidelity of Saint Joseph, and the vigilance of the shep-

herds and their great joy. “She gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in manger” (Lk 2:7). As we know manger is narrow container for feeding animals. It is a small thing simply built on ground. Those who want to see inside of manger, first they have to bend down, because it is very small. Thus the birth in manger tells us that those who want to receive Jesus, first of all have to humble themselves. They have to bend down. They have to recognize that we are creatures of god not the Creator, we are the sinners; can be saved only by Him who is laying in the manger and our pride, jealous, enmity etc. are the great obstacles to bend down and see the one who is in the manger.

“In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night” (Lk2:8). The shepherds were the first to see this; to receive the news of Jesus’ birth, why? They were the first because they were among the last and the outcast. And they were the first because they were awake, keeping watch in the night, guarding their flocks. Even though they were considered as outcast people, they were sincerely doing the things, what God had assigned to them (They were awake, keeping watch in the night, guarding their flocks). Here I remember the words saint mother Teresa “we are called not to be successful but to be faithful”. Shepherds were always faithful before God. Therefore whatever may be the state of life, (clergy or lay; owner or worker) each one is bound up to do a duty for the building up of kingdom of God which requires the child like simplicity and humility like the shepherds.

I conclude this reflection by the prophecy of Isaiah 9:2 “The people who walked in darkness have seen a greater light” means ‘the people who walked in pride have seen a greater humility (i.e.) birth of God in a manger.

-Pramod

Dec 31, 2017: The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

I Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 II Col 3:12-21 III Lk 2:22, 39-40

Priority of Family Life

A little boy greets his father as he returns from work with a question: “Daddy, how much do you make an hour?” The father

is surprised and says: "Look, son, not even your mother knows. Don't bother me now, I'm tired." "But Daddy, just tell me please! How much do you make an hour?" the boy insists. The father finally gives up and replies: "Twenty dollars." "Okay, Daddy," the boy continues, "Could you loan me ten dollars?" The father yells at him: "So that was the reason you asked how much I earn, right? Now, go to sleep and don't bother me anymore!" At night the father thinks over what he said and starts feeling guilty. Maybe his son needed to buy something. Finally, he goes to his son's room. "Are you asleep, son?" asks the father. "No, Daddy. Why?" replies the boy. "Here's the money you asked for earlier," the father said. "Thanks, Daddy!" replies the boy and receives the money. The he reaches under his pillow and brings out some more money. "Now I have enough! Now I have twenty dollars!" says the boy to his father, "Daddy, could you sell me one hour of your time?" Today's gospel has a message for this man and for all of us, and the message is that we need to invest more of our time in our family life.

The gospel shows us Jesus at the age of twelve. That was the age that every Jewish boy was expected to make his bar mitzvah and so become a responsible subject of the law. It was a ceremony of legal adulthood. From then on he was required to keep the law and make the annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem like any other Jewish man. One way teenagers celebrate their coming of age is to go out and do those things that the law had hitherto forbidden them to do. You know your boy is growing up when he stops asking where he came from and begins to not tell you where he is going. As we can see, Jesus was no exception. To celebrate his coming of age he attends the Temple Bible class without informing his parents. When his parents catch up with him after two days of searching for him everywhere, all he tells them is, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). Even holy families do have their occasional tensions and misunderstandings.

The most puzzling part of the story, however, is the way it ends: "Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and

was obedient to them” (v.51). The twelve-year old adult Jesus already knows that his mission is to be in his Father’s house and be about his Father’s business. From the test-run he did in Jerusalem earlier that day, it was clear that he was already capable of doing it very well, because “all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (v. 47). The puzzle then is this: If Jesus, already at the age of twelve, was ready to begin his public mission, and was evidently well prepared for it, why would he go down with his parents and spend the next eighteen years in the obscurity of a carpenter’s shed only to begin his public ministry at the age of thirty? Were those eighteen years wasted years? Certainly not! In a way that is hard for us to understand, Jesus’ hidden life in Nazareth was as much a part of his earthly mission as his public life. We are reminded that it was at this time that “Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour” (v.52). And when we reflect on the fact that for every one year of his public life Jesus spent ten years in family life, then we shall begin to understand the importance and priority he gave to family life.

We have two lives, a private or family life and a public or professional one. These two lives should be in harmony but very often they are in tension. Whereas Jesus resolved the tension by giving priority to his private life, we, unfortunately, often try to resolve it by giving priority to our professional life, leaving our family life to suffer. Rose Sands writes about the unhappy man who thought the only way he could prove his love for his family was to work hard. “To prove his love for her, he swam the deepest river, crossed the widest desert and climbed the highest mountain. She divorced him. He was never home.” The celebration today of the holy family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus reminds and challenges us to value and invest in our private life with our families before our professional life at the work place, even when our job is as important as saving the world.

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