

## **Homily for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas (Year C 2018)**

**December 30, 2018**

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Our lives are filled with endings and beginnings. Today is the last Sunday of 2018. Next Sunday will be the first of a brand new calendar year. When people finish a program, we say they have graduated, yet often the ritual is called a commencement.

Sometimes we experience endings that lead to the possibilities of new beginnings, like in baptism. One of the favourite experiences I encounter as a priest is when I have the privilege of presiding at a baptism.

The parents name the child. I baptize the child, and hand that child over to the parents and godparents symbolizing their important roles in that child's life. They, and the congregation, which make up a new family, respond that they will support that child in the days and years ahead. In essence, that child is dedicated to and adopted into a life of service of God and God's people.

In today's readings, we get a glimpse of two boys whose lives were undergoing a radical change, and whose endings and new beginnings were to transform not only them but also the world around them.

Samuel had been dedicated for service to God very early in life. Hannah, who had been barren, was able to become pregnant and offered her son, Samuel, to the priest, Eli, for service to God.

In our gospel – we get a glimpse into a pre-teen Jesus. A story that is unique in our gospels as we only find this account in Luke. Jesus, son of Mary, had been brought up in the faith of his parents, and when he was 12, accompanied them on an important trip to Jerusalem at the time of Passover.

These two young boys, Samuel and Jesus, both seen as gifts from God, were indeed about ready to transform the world in their day and in ours. At least Hannah knew where her son was!! He was in Shiloh with the priest Eli. But Mary and Joseph, trusting that their son was with the familiar crowd who had gone into Jerusalem suddenly lost track of him.

This is a parent's worst nightmare. It was after a day's journey that they realized he was not with the group. Panicked, Mary and Joseph went back into Jerusalem to find him, and it took another couple of days to do so. When they did, Jesus was in the temple sitting with the teachers, listening to them, and asking questions. His depth of questioning and understanding apparently astonished the teachers. His parents had raised him well!

When Mary and Joseph expressed their worry about his being lost, Jesus responded that it should have been obvious where he was, as it was his Father's house. We might wonder what the scriptures are not telling us. If any of us got an answer like that from our son after being missing for three days, we probably would be a little upset with him.

The story did say that Jesus returned with his parents and was obedient to them but also said that Mary treasured all of these things in her heart. Apparently in the midst of her worry and Jesus' response to her worry, Mary sensed that something profound was going on here, so much so that she took it into her heart and pondered the meaning of it all. And I think this brings an important point home for us. Mary pondered all these things in her heart.

When the Angel Gabriel visited Mary, she pondered the mystery of his greeting. At the birth of Jesus and the visit of the shepherds and the announcement of the angels of Jesus' birth, Mary treasured those words and pondered deep in her heart. And today, with the words of Jesus regarding the place he would be found and all that he was becoming, she treasured these things in her heart.

And so before we get too quick to move on with the world, before we pack away the Christmas scene, the manger, decorations, blasting into the new busy new year, the new beginnings, after all the visiting, celebrations, entertaining, and busyness, Mary gives us an example. Can we let Christmas which isn't even half way past cause us to recalibrate our lives? Can we ponder like Mary and ponder Christmas and all that it means? Ponder that the light and love of God has become and stood among us, that his love penetrates and changes our hearts, that his love that leads the world to reconciliation with God has come into our presence. Don't let it pass you by this Christmas. There is still time as we continue to celebrate this season.

Ponder this mystery in your hearts. Give yourself some time to find the light in Jesus the child, even as we hear today's story of this holy family. Allow some time for the light of God in Jesus the child to find you.

Spend an extra moment at the communion rail to view the beautiful nativity scene at communion or after the service and to ponder.

Again, Christmas blessings to you all.