

2019 CHRISTMAS MASSES

Last Sunday my Homily was focussed upon Joseph and the mental anguish he went through after he had heard that the woman he was engaged to- his beloved Mary- was pregnant. But then the angel Gabriel revealed to him that Mary's pregnancy was miraculous and all was well. My homily concluded with Joseph tenderly holding Mary's hand and saying: "We will be together in this Mary. We will raise our Son to be faithful and obedient to the laws and He will bring us great joy."

Over the last week the thought has continually come back to me that Joseph and Mary were deeply, deeply in love. As they made their way to Bethlehem, they were newly married and most certainly head over heels in love which each other. They were united in their openness to God's call for them to be the parents of the longed-awaited Messiah.

On Monday night, soon after Shelley-Anne, Gisela and the Camero children had finished constructing our superb stable, I spent some very special time reflecting on what it depicted. And it occurred to me that Joseph and Mary when they gazed upon Jesus asleep in the manger would almost certainly have joined hands, united not only in their love for Jesus but also in their love for each other.

And as they gazed upon Him, they would have felt a huge surging of love for their Divine Child and a huge surging of love for each other.

Jesus, the Son of God, was born to parents who were in love. He, Who was love itself was brought into a home where the only language was love.

Later in the night Mary, Joseph and the Baby Jesus were joined by a group of shepherds led to the stable by a twinkling star. The shepherds would have brought their herd of sheep with them so it would have been noisy. Chances are the shepherds would have been all closely related- grandparents, parents, brothers, cousins perhaps sisters as well. Together, as a family, they came to Bethlehem to worship the Christ Child.

Perhaps the only creature alone in the stable that night would have been the donkey

And so it is that on Christmas Day families come together and as family come to worship the Christ Child at Mass.

Love is the essence of Christmas. Tonight at Mass, husbands and wives- don't be afraid to hold hands as you gaze on the Crib...just as Joseph and Mary surely did. Boys and girls, today be especially kind to each other. The Divine Child in the Manger is a light to the world radiating the love of God for us. He comes to us as a loveable, smiling baby. He is God with us, sharing our joys and sorrows.

And so like the shepherds on the first Christmas Day, you have come as a family, to celebrate Christ's Birth.

Today you will eat together and be family together. Perhaps you will give presents to each other. Today you will ignore those things which upset you in family members. Rather you will celebrate their goodness and renew your love for them.

But there will be some in our community who are a bit like that solitary donkey. In our crib he is right at the very back just looking on. But I have a sense that both Mary and Joseph would have not ignored their faithful donkey. They would have made a fuss of him- giving him lots of pats, wrapping him up warmly and feeding him well.

So, too, we must look out for those in our community who are alone and yearn- if not for pats- at least for words of love.

However I'm sure the donkey would not have been feeling sorry for itself. To carry on its back beautiful Mary and her unborn Child. What a privilege!

Those who are alone and feel lonely could perhaps give thanks to God for the blessings of past days and pray for all the young families around them.

And so as this Mass continues, let us open our hearts to Jesus, the new born Baby reaching out to us for love. And let us, at the same time, reach out in love to each other.

A very Happy Christmas to you all from all of us at St. Mary Star of the Sea.