

## *Our Lady of Lourdes Church*

Feast of the Holy Family

December 27, 2009

Fr. Bob

Readings:

Sirach 2:2-7, 12-14

Colossians 3:12-21

Luke 2:41-52

When we were baptized, the idea of family was expanded. In baptism, we became part of something much larger than our parents, siblings and other relatives. In a sense, we were born or adopted into the family of the local church. And from there, it continues to expand to even more because of the nature of what it means to be Catholic, to be universal. It means that we belong to the larger community of the world and that has many facets. From Richmond, to our country, to all the countries of the world, because Christ binds us to everyone. Because of Christ, and his universal message, we cannot remove ourselves from our obligations not only to pray and worship but also to serve for the good of all people. And with that obligation comes a certain attitude, a certain way of looking at the world that God created in the first place. And it has nothing to do with politics; it has to do with how God wants us to act and behave.

It's modeled for us, on this Feast of the Holy Family, in our Gospel reading today. With Christmas we celebrated Christ's coming into the world and it would seem logical to only focus on him. In today's Feast of the Holy Family, Christ is very much a part of the story. Things are happening around him because of who he is. But the focus seems to fall on Joseph and Mary. Joseph is the one who receives the message from the angel. He is the one who has to pick up his family, in the dead of night, and move them to safety. He is the protector, the one in his small family that is responsible for their safety and their well being. His wife Mary had made her commitment, her assent to the will of God. Joseph had done the same thing when he took her as his wife, and when he responded to the urgent plea of an angel. And in today's Gospel, we are shown them acting together in protecting, in worrying about and in searching for their son.

So it's appropriate during the season of Christmas, that we take what may seem to be a diversion from what Christ means to something else. Mary is a sign to us of what it means to say yes. To say yes to God when we don't know what it will all mean. To say yes, throughout her entire life as she watched her son grow, develop, live and die and live again. Joseph is another sign to us of the quality of fidelity to God. The man who quietly (we don't hear much about what he actually says) just does what is necessary and what is required. In their own separate ways, they show us what holiness means. Embodied in this feast, the Feast of the Holy Family, is the idea where we first learn, continue to learn, and continue to accept the idea of Christ in our lives. It happens in the holiness that we are all able to obtain within our own families, and our larger families of the world. Despite our imperfections, despite our problems, despite dysfunction, there are moments when our lives as a human family manage to come together and rise above our humanity and show and become a sign to each member of something about the possibility of holiness in saying yes to what God asks, and showing us something of how the presence of God can come to us in close, intimate ways. Within our larger family, is the possibility of seeing the Word made flesh in this world through the actions of our lives and choices. We should not take lightly our roles in our own world to be signs of God's presence. We can't control the other members, we can't dictate the actions of others. But we can do something ourselves to show that we are blessed, we are consecrated, and that we belong to God. Like so many other things, we may be the best of signs to others and point to something greater than our own lives, our own differences and our own pettiness.