

## **12/27/15 ..... Holy Family C**

-- This year on the Feast of the Holy Family, we get a glimpse into the only incident from Jesus' life as a youth recorded in the scriptures. He's 12 years old, on the brink of being regarded as an adult in that culture.

-- But he's still expected to respect and obey his parents. So, when he disappears, they are understandably worried and even a bit angry. Their anxiety level is probably going through the roof.

-- Parents in many places and cultures can relate to this feeling. Worry dominates our world today. Take the Muslim mother in our country who worries whether her teenage son will be hooked on one of those militant websites. Or that her daughter who's started to wear the hijab to school will be teased and even suspected of evil things.

-- Or take any mother whose son has been injured playing some sport and is prescribed an opiate medication. She hears the stories of kids who have gotten hooked on them and have even gone to shooting heroin.

-- Or take any parent whose child has not returned home one night. They are worried sick that something bad has happened. Even if their child turns up at a friend's house, having forgotten to call, the worry is great.

-- In fact, the Holy Family experienced the worries most parents experience. And their son gave a strange answer, telling them he had to be about his Father's business. Almost sounds like a smart-alek answer I might have given my parents at that age.

-- Of course, Jesus wasn't that, but his parents probably found him hard to understand, like most parents do at times. They knew Jesus was special but they didn't really know how all this would work out.

-- This year we have this gospel paired with the story of Samuel as an even younger boy, being entrusted to the priest by his mother. She had dedicated him to God, but she could not have known that he would become a great prophet and leader.

-- I'm sure she and her husband had anxiety when they left him at the temple in the custody of Eli. At whatever age, mothers face anxiety in letting go of children, even if it's to a college several hundred miles away.

-- But God was with Hannah, Elkanah and their son Samuel. Even though Eli's sons did evil, it did not rub off on Samuel. God's presence was also with Mary and Joseph as they continued to care for their Son, mindful that there were greater things in store for him.

-- As we reflect on these stories of families living many centuries before us, we know many things have changed in the world. But most of the basic challenges families face and emotions they endure have not changed all that much.

-- Can we entrust ourselves to God's providence, even as we make our best efforts to raise our children and loved ones in God's ways? Are you patient with the process of your children growing up?

-- We long for safety and security for children and those entrusted to our care. There's nothing wrong with that. But we must not be afraid to allow them to be what God has called them to be.

-- That means they must strike out with some independence. Of course, that does not happen overnight. Most of you will not allow your 12 year old simply to take off, promising to be back in a week.

-- But there comes a time when they have to be about God's business for them. We must allow them to pursue that. Fear is natural, but it should not be paralyzing, even in our day with its insecurities.

-- The example of the Holy Family is there. It shows us that God's work will be done when we are attentive to his will and his desire to work in the lives of our family members.