

The Inclusive Community

First Sunday After Christmas Day

December 27, 2009

Homily of Terry and Fred Quinn

Luke 2:41-52

Theme: Family Life

Today's gospel scene would be hard to take in the immediacy of contemporary society. CNN and all the networks would be sounding the alarm for the missing child. The frenzied parents would be on TV asking for help and rightly so. Then can you imagine what would happen when the boy is found---- the fuss over the boy wonder who could teach and enter into spiritual discussion with the religious leaders of the Temple. You Tube would have millions of hits all over the world and a star would be born. But at the base of the story would be a family and a son, listening to the spirit within him, impelling him to his destiny. Actually, biblical scholars are not sure if this event actually occurred, or perhaps that it might have occurred when the family made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and perhaps Jesus just stayed behind and eventually went to John the Baptist to study, meditate, learn and discuss. In any case the gospel writers are telling us that from an early age Jesus displayed a deep interest in the Scriptures and talked about his thoughts, telling stories and reaching out to others to tell about the Way of life he envisioned for all of us.

We can see the independence of spirit that Jesus displays and as parents Fred and I can readily understand how Jesus' parents and family must have felt. It's particularly apropos this Sunday because we are celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary and in doing so are also celebrating what our family means to us. When our children were very young , Fred wrote short letters to each of them. He's going to read an excerpt from each letter to show, not that he is a prophet,

but that he could see something in the spirit of each child that would grow as they grew and form the persons that would become.

Fred--- I wrote to Marty on his first birthday---and in the last paragraph I said, “ As for your future, I just hope our good fortune continues and that you grow up learning from some of the good things your mother and I are----that you learn other good things from many other people and that someday you’ll be a man— free, sensitive to others, loving, strong, and your own person. -----and that is exactly who Martin Joseph Quinn has become, someone so many love and connect to in the most positive ways.

To Marisa I wrote when she was 2 years old, “ You sometimes remind me of a golden kernel of popcorn who is continually popping. Your eyes, your sunshiny smile, your con man’s line, really keep me alert and alive to your approach. You’re going to be pretty, but you’re not going to stand still and model your beauty. You’re going to be a mover, moving other people, moving ever within yourself. Her students and the many people she helps would tell you that she moves them to do their best with creativity and her friends would tell you of how she moves to help whenever there is a need.

To Monica, I wrote, “You bubble over with gleeful laughter in such a way that one suspects that you sense the warmth and love that can be brought out in people. You notice details with that kind of total concentration that studies the object of your interest and embraces it. “ a former architecture assistant, and now a toy designer, that attention to detail and expertise has only grown with the years, as has Monica’s concern for others and readiness to volunteer, whether it’s at the Children’s Hospital in Philadelphia or just helping someone who needs a smile or someone to talk to.

I wonder what Mary or Joseph would have written or expressed about Jesus or his siblings. As Terry said Christmas Eve, we are talking about a family here, not a well-to do family, but a hardworking family , a spiritual family following Judaic law and traditions. While we know nothing about Jesus’ life until he began his public ministry, we do know that his mother took an active role in that ministry, traveling with him, and most probably giving him motherly advice

and support. We deduce that this must have been an outgrowth of her understanding and support of Jesus throughout their family life. Bob Dylan, poet of the 60's, that decade of turmoil and exciting change, the decade that Terry and I met, fell in love and married wrote one of our favorite songs, *Forever Young*. The words of the second and third stanzas are:

May you grow up to be righteous,
May you grow up to be true,
May you always know the truth
And see the lights surrounding you.
May you always be courageous,
Stand upright and be strong,
May you stay forever young,

May your hands always be busy,
May your feet always be swift,
May you have a strong foundation
When the winds of changes shift.
May your heart always be joyful,
May your song always be sung,
May you stay forever young,

The principles of righteousness, truthfulness, courage, strength and the willingness to work , using one's own creativity are aspects of living that we hope all parents, like Mary and Joseph, have for their children. When the winds of changes shift, we know how important a good foundation is---and when the troubles and sadness that one inevitably encounters in life occur, a joyful heart with songs within it to be sung is helpful and even contagious to those around us. So in that sense, as Dylan tells us it's important

to be "forever young" in spirit, so that that spirit continues to co-create as it evolves within our world, our universe. In that spiritual evolvment, we can affect not only our own family, but as another poet of the 60's told us in his song, "So this is Christmas" ---

And so this is Christmas
For weak and for strong
For rich and the poor ones
The road is so long
And so happy Christmas
For black and for white
For yellow and red ones
Let's stop all the fight

{Refrain}

And so this is Christmas
And what have we done
Another year over
And a new one just begun

Let us be "forever young" and think of what we have done and will do in the new year and the years to come to enliven and strengthen with the gift of the spirit within each of us-- our own families and the family of the world.