



Pope Francis, Angelus St Peter's Square Feast of the Holy Family

The Holy Family of Nazareth – Jesus, Mary, and Joseph – were united by an intense love and animated by great confidence in God.

In the Holy Family astonishment never failed. To feel astonishment, is the opposite of taking everything for granted... It means opening ourselves to others. This attitude, is important for "healing compromised relationships" and curing "the open wounds within the family." The anxiety felt by Mary and Joseph shows the centrality of Jesus in the Holy Family. And so, we see why the family of Nazareth is holy: because it was centred on Jesus; all the attention and care of Joseph revolved around Him.

The anxiety felt by Mary and Joseph when Jesus was lost for three days should also be our anxiety when we are far from Jesus; when we forget Jesus, going without prayer, without reading the Gospel for several days. Mary and Joseph, found Jesus in the Temple; and we too, should seek Jesus in the house of God – and especially in the liturgy, where we have the living experience of Jesus, in His Word and in the Eucharist, from which we receive the strength to face the difficulties of each day. Let us all pray for all the families of the world, especially those that, for various reasons, are lacking in peace and harmony and entrust them to the protection of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

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**St Mary's
Parish**

**Serving
the
Community**

**Serving
the
Family**

**Serving
the
City**

What Family Means to Me

By Kelly Roper

To me, family means:

I will never be truly alone, and
I'll always have a place to call home.
I have people who know the real me,
And they still love me even if we disagree.
Though sometimes we may fuss and fight,
In the end everything will be all right
Because families forgive each other no matter what.
That's just the way it is, no ifs, ands, or buts.
Family stays true all the way down the line,
And I couldn't live without these people of mine.
Yes, this is what family means to me,
If this rings true for you, then I'm sure you agree.



Exhibitions of Love

By Alison Jean Thomas

A pat on the hand,
A peck on the cheek,
A slap on the back,
A hug.
No need to speak.
Family love is all around
Like air in a room
Invisible but always present.

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Surprise Us, Lord

For New Year, we pray for blessings we can't yet imagine.



By Katherine Lucky

I would have said: let the baby be born in a bed! Let the parents be prosperous. I never would have imagined it could be any other way.” (Pixabay)

Several years ago, my husband made me a jewelry box for Christmas. He purchased pieces of maple from a specialty shop, then measured and cut the wood, sanded it, stained it in a caramel color, and fastened it together with metal and leather. He lined the inside with velvet, creating compartments for bracelets and rings. When I opened the box, I was delighted: not just because of its craftsmanship, but because it was something I hadn't known I needed, hadn't thought to ask for, hadn't imagined could exist.

Some gifts are like this. They're wonderful not because they're a variation on a category of things everyone already knows you like, such as books or sweaters or wine. (Though those kinds of presents are nice, too, showing that you're known.) Instead, they're entirely unexpected, outside the realm of what you thought possible. It's not that you longed for a jewelry box and now your longing is realized. It's that you never gave it one thought until now, until it became just what you needed.

That is what I'm asking God for this Advent: surprises, impossibilities, unexpected solutions, the working out of things in ways I can't envision.

All year, I've been asking for particulars: medicines, vaccinations, open hospital beds. Cold freezers and smooth distributions. Certain electoral outcomes. Justice that looks a certain way. Peace that I can picture. Agreement (i.e. everyone else agreeing with me). I've seen what I want for this world, and I've been furious when it hasn't come to pass.

As we arrive at the end of the year, I find I can no longer see the way forward. I can't imagine how we'll achieve immunity. I can't imagine how kids will get back to school or how the hungry will be fed, how griefs will be soothed or policing transformed. I can't imagine politics looking any different—unless different means worse. Some disagreements run so deep I don't know if they can ever be negotiated. How could that conversation go any differently than it has for months?

And I can't imagine how this coming week will be anything but disappointing. My husband and I are spending Christmas together. We'll eat tamales and chocolate crinkle cookies, open presents, and attend some virtual services. It should be a nice day. But we'll also be far away from loved ones, traditions, and our homes. Won't that just feel crummy? Around the country, people will gather or they won't, for reasons good and bad; they'll feel guilty, or angry, or defiant, or depressed. They know someone who's died, or they have material needs, or they feel less than free. How could this season be anything but lonely, symbolic of all our divisions and hatreds?

Surprise me, Lord. Work out the logistics. Baffle me with your solutions. Make a way.

Surprise me, Lord. Don't do things as I would do them. A baby in a manger, surrounded by animals, sleeping in straw—that seems vulgar and dangerous and sad! But then you dignified the scene with a star. Kings came bearing precious metal and perfume. I would have said: *let the baby be born in a bed! Let the parents be prosperous.* I never would have imagined it could be any other way.

Surprise me, Lord. Scripture warns against being caught off guard. Don't be unprepared for the thieves in the night, the besieging army just outside your city gates. Christ will come when you least expect it—you'd better hope you're ready. I hope I'm ready, after this year. Eyes to see, ears to hear. Not too cynical to see how grace might arrive quiet and crisp and holy.

**ALL DAILY MASSES THIS WEEK
10am & 12.40**

In Memoriam

Weekend of 19/20 December

11am: Patrick Meade

Weekend of 16/17 January

6pm Vigil: Pat O'Mahony

11am Larry & Ita Connaughton and grandson John