

**Homily of Bishop Martin Hayes, Kilmore, Ireland on the Solemnity of the Holy Family to launch the Jubilee Year of Hope in Kilmore Diocese at the Cathedral of St Patrick & St Felim, Cavan with a focus on the 2025 World Day of Peace Message of Pope Francis (in bold print).**

A lost child is a cause of panic – I was the eldest of eight at home. Anytime, when some of the younger children went missing, there was a frantic search and a calling out their names. Imagine the situation for Mary and Joseph – Jesus was missing for three days! They must have been losing hope and fearing the worst.

We witness the worry of Mary and Joseph as parents. Their distress mirrors that of parents today, their constant concern for their children, for their health & wellbeing as children, when they are out socialising as they get older, their worry about the influence of social media, their futures, jobs, relationships, etc. Then we have Jesus asserting himself. We catch a glimpse of his future mission, his ability to speak with the scripture scholars, which mirrors the gifts and talents of our children, their assertiveness, their future destinies. Eventually, parents come to realise that they have to let go. Their children are not theirs; they belong to Someone else!

In our Gospel we do see that Jesus went and lived under the authority of Mary and Joseph in Nazareth for a further 18 years until he emerged into his public ministry. It is further evidence of how God came among us as one of us, of Jesus taking on the human condition, all part of the mystery of the Word made flesh - Incarnation.

Jesus came among us to be handed over or handed back to God in the spirit of our 1<sup>st</sup> Rd from 1<sup>st</sup> Book of Samuel which tells the story of '**how Hannah and Elkanah handed over Samuel to the Lord for the whole of his life**'. They received Samuel arising from a prayer to God and presented him back to God. Their story reveals a sense of awareness of God's plan. Samuel was to be a prophet, judge and leader of the Chosen People.

That sense that God has a plan gives us all hope. Being born in a particular family, in particular circumstances is part of God's plan. It may not seem like that at all, as we know that not all family life offers the love and support that is the ideal. There must be an awareness of seeking to know God's plan, the bigger plan of God for all of us. Family life is rooted in "*respect and joy in each other's life*" according to Richard Bach.

In our 2<sup>nd</sup> Rd from 1 John, we hear of that bigger plan of God, of **the lavish love of God** for us. We are called '**children of God**', and as '**already the children of God**'. We have become the children of God, part of the family of God through the loving sacrifice of Jesus for us. In celebrating the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph today, we are called to model our family life on that of Nazareth, be it at home or here in our lives together as a parish, both of which offer us hope for the future.

St John in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Rd proclaims that "**what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed**" yet indicates that we can trust in God's loving plan. Recognising that not all family life is happy, we pray for family life; that its vital potential in the nurturing of our Christian faith modelled on the life of the Holy Family in Nazareth may be acknowledged and lived. That vital giving witness to our faith, which can feature in family life, is not always acknowledged as mentioned by St John, so family life needs our support and prayers. Family can enable faith to grow only with a reliance upon God. That is our hope for the future.

Every 25 years the Church celebrates a Jubilee Year – a biblical notion of setting aside debts, a time of forgiveness and reconciliation to re-establish our relationship with God. This New year of 2025 will be a Jubilee Year of Hope. The Jubilee Year of Hope has been launched in St Peter's Basilica in Rome on Christmas Eve with the opening of a Holy Door and a Holy Door in a prison to indicate a way forward to peace in our world.

**In his Message for the World Day of Peace on New Years Day at the beginning of the Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis, (as highlighted at our Christmas Midnight Mass) calls us to,**

**-Cancel all the debts that are crippling poorer countries,**

**-Protect human life from the moment of conception, eliminate the death penalty and**

**-Use a fixed percentage of money earmarked for arms production to eliminate hunger in poorer countries**

**In supporting these proposals, we hold out hope for young people into the future.**

The **logo** for the Jubilee Year, displayed in the Church porch, (and on our screens) calls us to commit ourselves anew to the message of Jesus Christ, which gathers us from the four corners of the world around the Cross that becomes an anchor offering stability, steadfastness, and hope in difficult times.

Our **Jubilee Prayer**, our Communion Reflection, calls us to openness to God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to allow the glory of God be seen, to become 'pilgrims of hope' offering to each other the treasure of our Christian faith based on the lavish love of God, the Father, the example of Jesus Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Our **Prayers of the Faithful** take account of the different Jubilee of Hope celebrations that will take place in the coming year around family, parents, young people, the elderly, those who work as volunteers, the missionaries (lay, religious, clergy), the educators – all who are of service to others.

Further resources for the upcoming Jubilee Year of Hope are available and will be publicised. **In calling this Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis is inviting us to follow the example of Jesus, to engage in the job of 'disarming hearts' so as to offer 'hope and kindness' to build peace.**

Sometimes we are lost, we have lost someone (a child) or something. We are called to renew our faith in the lavishing loving God who is our hope for the future.

**END.**