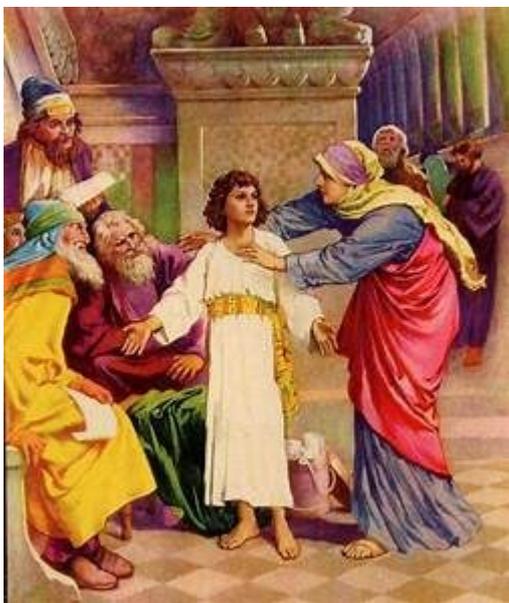


Holy Family – December 30, 2018

1 Samuel 1: 22, 24-28 1 John 3: 1-2, 21-24 Luke 2: 41-52

I particularly like the account of this incident in the life of Jesus that has just been read because of the very humanness of it. In some ways it can be considered quite like experiences between parents and children in our own lives. This can be readily seen in the interaction between Jesus, Mary and



Joseph. It actually provides a strong emphasis on the mystery of the Incarnation, of God taking on our human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Divine, as is suggested by his having to be in his “Father’s house. But he is also human, causing Mary and Joseph to be upset.

We can also appreciate the dynamic of the role of God’s presence in human lives in the account of the birth of the Old Testament prophet Samuel. Samuel was a child who was longed for over many years. Hannah and Elkeniah were finally able to give birth. Their faith and hope in God was realized. Considering herself to have been blessed, Hannah is true to a promise she had made and thus dedicates, returns, this child to the source of all life, God. This is not a denial of love or care for Samuel, but a profound insight into her love and care for him. She dedicates Samuel to God so that a greater or

more important goal, God's purpose in the life of Samuel, might be achieved. This is a very human demonstration of love. It is also a reflection of how Elkeniah and Hannah realize the love of God that they had experienced.

From these two examples of family life put before us today we can gain a greater appreciation of the thoughts we have also heard from Saint John. The first opportunity that any of us had to learn about the presence and the effect of love took place within the context of family life. It is within family life, hopefully, that we experience and come to know how to love and to be loved. We are described by John as "children" in order to point out that we have the same intimate relationship with God as can be experienced within a family. John is telling us how truly important all persons are in relationship to God. Each of us and all of us, whoever we are, wherever we come from, are set apart as sacred so that we can reflect in our daily living the name and the inheritance given to us by God. As children of God we are to reflect a life that is truly God-like. This is the challenge before us day after day.

With the story of the finding in the Temple reminding us of the importance of recognizing God with us we celebrate at Christmas, with the account of the fulfillment of hope and trust in the birth of Samuel and the response made in his dedication to God, and with the profound insight of the author, John, that calls on us to realize our importance as children our loving Father, we can be reaffirmed in the faith and trust that we place in a truly good and gracious God.