

Holy Family (B) 12/28/2014

One day a six year old girl and her Nanna go to see the outdoor Manger scene at church. Since they are also going out for a breakfast treat grandma says, *'Do you think we should bring the Baby Jesus some pancakes?'*

'No Nanna,' the little girl replies. *'I like the pancakes.'*

'Well how about some eggs or toast?'

'No Nanna, I like the eggs and toast.'

'Well how about some oatmeal?'

'Oh that's okay Nanna, he can have ALL the oatmeal... I don't like it anyway.'

We tend to view **children** as cute in their honesty. We are sometimes **tolerant** of **teens** who are less cute in their need to express **what they like** and **what they don't like**. We often find **adults** insufferable when they **insist** on announcing **their likes** and **dislikes**. **Holiness**, is rarely **neat and tidy** or **predictable**, and doesn't **completely eliminate** the **human trait** to have **likes** and **dislikes**, or **selfishness**.

Family is a place in which we **unconsciously assume** the **likes** and **dislikes** of our parents and other siblings. These **likes** and **dislikes** can be **helpful**. They provide us with a **personality**. They can also - especially when they are **unconsciously influencing** us - make us **self-centered**, or **ego-driven**. No matter how we look at it, **families** (like **holiness**) are **messy**.

Unfortunately, **immature religion** and **spirituality** refuse to see the **messiness**. They **demand** and **require purity**, which is another name for **perfection**. Yet, both **Luke** and **Matthew** create scenarios that show us that **holiness** is rarely **neat and tidy** or **predictable**; that the **birth** of **Jesus** (the **Incarnation**)

is messy; that the **Christian** way of life is messy...
AND God is in the **middle of the mess**.

Mary is **unexpectedly** and **inexplicably** found to be **pregnant**; she and **Joseph** hastily marry; the birth of **Jesus** takes place in a **dirty** and **smelly** stable; they are visited by **uncouth** and **unwashed** and **impure** shepherds; they have to **escape** at night and flee to **Egypt** like **refugees** to avoid certain death; they are **compelled** to make the **offering of the poor** when **Jesus** is circumcised; they are **promised** that their hearts will be **broken** because of the sufferings of their child; and their child is **lost**.

Yes, **family**, **relationships**, **holiness** are all messy, and **rarely** what we expect them to be... **AND God** is with us in the **mess**. This is the **message** of the **cross**. This is the **good news** that **Jesus** proclaims to us.