



The Holy Family of Jesus Mary and Joseph

† Sunday 31st December 2017

In England & Wales

Cycle of Prayer: Openness to the word of God

Keynote: The holy family of God and fidelity to God's promise

Genesis 15:1-6

'Later the word of the Lord God was spoken to Abram in a vision, "Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great"'. But Abram has no children and says to the Lord God: "'I go childless... see, you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.'" Then, this word of the Lord was spoken to him: "He shall not be your heir; your heir will be of your own flesh and blood.'" Then taking Abram outside, he said: "look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants.'" Abram put his faith in the Lord God, who counted this as making him justified.' We speak of Abraham as our 'father in faith' – that like him, we may place our trust and confidence in the word of God.

Responsorial Psalm 104 (105) – God's fidelity to his promise

Letter to the Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

Abraham's example of faith becomes the benchmark for the true disciple. Its chief characteristic is illustrated by Abraham's total obedience to God's word, *'It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was given to him and his descendants, and that he set out without knowing where he was going.'* Our own call to faith is just like that. We are invited to set out on a journey, we know not quite how, nor where God will lead us. *'It was equally by faith that Sarah, in spite of being past the age, was made able to conceive, because she believed that he who had made the promise would be faithful to it. Because of this, there came from one man... more descendants than could be counted, as many as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand on the seashore.'* Through faith we are those descendants – we have inherited the promise first given by God to Abraham because of his faith and trust in God.

Gospel according to Luke 2:22-40

There were a number of requirements laid upon Jews requiring them to make ritual offerings in the Temple at the dedication of their firstborn. But the evangelist Luke while he makes references to these venerable customs may actually be saying something else. At various points in the Luke's gospel the evangelist relates an event where Jesus is to be found in the Temple. This event may be the first in a series of significant presences of Jesus in the Temple. *'Now in Jerusalem there was man named Simeon (a name incidentally that means 'God has heard')... he was an upright and devout man... and prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple... and he took the child in his arms and blessed God: "Now, master, you can let your servant go in peace just as you promised. My eyes have seen the salvation that you have prepared for all the nations to see. A light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel."* Is Luke reminding us that God is to be found among the people – in their very midst and that God's presence will purify us too? We are intended to look on the face of Jesus for we have seen salvation too.