

**Thought for the week**  
30<sup>th</sup> December 2018  
Feast of the Holy Family

Today's readings touch on what it means to have a family – the love, the respect the sacrifices.

In the first letter of St John we are reminded that  
*'we are called God's children and that is what we are.'*

Having just celebrated the birth of our Lord in very modest circumstances in the stable in Bethlehem, we now celebrate the Holy family – and our divine connection through our own families.

Pope John Paul II described family as *"the sanctuary of life"*. And within the family each member is accepted, respected and honoured because he or she is a person.

Sociologists coined the term nuclear family for a unit of 2 parents and two children. Decades on we recognise loving families come in a variety of different shapes and sizes. And most face the challenge of the loss of close contact with grandparents and other extended family due to relocation for work.

Many of us will have been fortunate to have been be able to come together, possibly with extended family this Christmas, sharing a special meal, drinks and games - rejoicing in this feast in body and spirit.

In today's Gospel reading from Luke we learn that at another feast, that of the Passover, the 12-year-old Jesus remains on his own in the Temple answering questions asked by the learned teachers there.

Mary and Joseph have no idea that Jesus has stayed behind and is not on the caravan travelling home with them. Any parent can relate strongly to the anguish they felt when they found Jesus was not with them. I know that heart-thumping moment when you realise one of your children has gone missing; the pain of the family not being whole, even for a short while.

Let us give thanks for the gift of our family, to reflect on the joys we receive from them, and as we as we look forward to the start of a new year, to ask our Lord to guide us how best to give the love and practical help needed to ensure our families thrive and prosper in his name.

A parishioner