



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Holy Family-Year C-December 26th 2021

Readings: 1 Samuel 1: 20-22 24-28, Psalm 83, 1 John 3: 1-2 21-24

Luke 2: 41-52

To many, no doubt, among those who have voluntarily absented themselves from the Kingdom, there is mild surprise to find that the happiest day of the year, the feast of the Nativity, should be followed, hard on its heels by a series of apparent tragedies, cruelty and disaster. Christians, of course, don't see it like that.

The first follower of Christ to bear witness with his blood is Stephen, one of the first deacons and a patron of servers – his name daily on our lips before Mass. Then there follows, in short order, the Holy Innocents – butchered in an act which underlines the sheer depravity of the human heart – and Thomas a Becket, among others, cut down before the altar of God for defending the Church against secular tyranny.

It's a strange collection and even stranger juxtaposition BUT.... the whole point is that it is what happens to the faithful pilgrim as often as not.

Today is the Feast of the Holy Family and, some would say, that should be our focus. But the truth is that these saints, obscured too often by the Advent of Christ and then His birth need reclaiming. Too often they just get lost under the weight of His glory. After all, they are family too – genuinely related by blood and their supreme witness is to that self-

same glory of Christ. And they mark out, as clearly as anyone, the inevitable direction of the Christian journey.

At the far end of the bookshop in Buckfast Abbey there is a little roundabout of cards by Maria Lasch – beautiful evocations of the spiritual realities. One in particular stands out with its foreground representation of the Bethlehem moment. But no sooner have we embraced joy of that moment than we register a long and winding road leading, in the distance, to another hillside which is the Calvary. We are shown, at once, both the beautiful glory of Salvation and its inevitable cost. The Salvation road passes through the exile of Egypt, the obscurity of Nazareth, the dawnrise of the Galilee to the tumult of Jerusalem. The pilgrim soul travels this road through service and suffering to sanctification and glory. There is no route that does not pass through Golgotha. Ours is not as spectacular as the red marks on the calendar of the martyr saints but martyrs, witnesses, bloodied or not, we must be. It is all of a piece. We are part, with the martyr throng, of the ever expanding Holy Family of Jesus – held in the arms of Mary, watched over by the loving human guardianship of Joseph and the divine guardianship of the angelic host – committed, at every opportunity to telling the waiting world of the coming of Christ - at first in love and then later in judgement – as He awaits the response of every man. It is our solemn and joyful duty to proclaim, as messengers and witnesses, martyrs all , no matter what the cost.