

**Homily**  
28 December 2008  
Feast of the Holy Family  
Gen. 15:1-6;21:1-3; Heb. 11:8,11-12,17-19; Luke 2:22-40



When I look back over my life, what has made it interesting are all the things I didn't expect.

I grew up in Omaha but I found my true love on a bus in Seattle. We started a family in the two months between insurance policies. I became Catholic. My mom died unexpectedly. I found my current job almost by accident. I became a deacon, survived cancer and now I find myself preaching homilies.

Who plans this stuff?



Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Joseph -- they certainly didn't plan the things that happened to them. They were asked to play a part in the salvation of the world. I'm sure they didn't expect that.

"How can this be" Mary asked the angel.

What's really funny, if you think about it, is what God wanted them to do. They had to become parents and raise a child. The miracle was in the timing and the circumstance, the rest seemed mundane.

You see, we don't save the world. Only God can do that. All we can do is exactly what Abraham and Sarah, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna did: trust in God, keep his commandments, practice the faith, and then live the life we are given.

But this won't happen without effort. Life is unpredictable and it's easy to convince yourself that things happen randomly. Many people tell us that there is no reality beyond what we can detect with our senses.

Was it chance that I met Janet on that bus? Was there something to be learned from my bout with cancer?

Trust in God, keep his commandments, practice the faith. These aren't quite the same things. And it's important to understand that they reinforce one another:

- If you don't believe God's promises, how will you keep His commandments?
- If you don't keep his commandments, how likely are you to study scripture, receive the sacraments, make time for prayer, or do works of mercy?
- If you don't practice the faith, how will you keep in mind all of God's promises?

Trusting God, keeping the commandments, practicing the faith: these are the things holy people have always done. Not just when they have time, or just when they feel like it, but day in and day out.



Maybe coping with the randomness of life is how God wants you to take-part in his plan for salvation: nothing as dramatic as he asked of Abraham or Mary, but important none-the-less.

How you live your life can bring others to God.

- We always pray "... forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." So many of hurts we receive in life come unexpectedly from other people. Do we bear wrongs patiently and forgive as we should?

- We know we should keep the Lord's day holy. When something happens and we can't get to mass when we planned, can we get to mass at another time? Do others see how you make time come-what-may for Sunday mass and the other holy days of obligation?
- When people are in trouble, it often comes at an inconvenient time. Are we good Samaritans helping others when the need arises?

Do these things because of your love for God, and people will notice.

Living your faith through all of life's ups and downs, twists and turns, is not only a personal witness to God, but a testimony to the faith of those who have gone before: the faith of Abraham, Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna.