

The holy family

Katharine Smith *reflects on* Luke 2:41-end

We can imagine that when Jesus, Mary and Joseph leave Jerusalem, each is lost in his or her own thoughts. Joseph remembers Jesus speaking in the Temple: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” He’d always known he wasn’t the “real” father of Jesus, yet he couldn’t have loved him more had he been his own son. He knew, because Mary had told him, that the angel had told her who Jesus really was. Today that knowledge has moved from his head to his heart, and Joseph is surprised at how much it hurts.

Mary, too, remembers those words, “my Father’s house”. Her little boy is growing

up fast and she must begin to let him go, commending him into his Father’s hands. She is so proud of him but she’s afraid for him, too. She hasn’t forgotten Simeon’s words, “a sword will pierce your own soul too”.

Jesus looks back over the city and already longs to return to the Temple. He is so aware of his Father’s presence in that place, and he’s becoming more aware of God calling him into a special relationship. He will respond to that calling – he couldn’t resist even if he wanted to – but where will it take him?

Together the little family returns to Nazareth, knowing that somehow life will never be the same for them after Jerusalem. ☺

Lord Jesus, help us to grow in our understanding of who you are and in our relationship with you. Reveal to us the love of our heavenly Father and help us to respond to God’s calling faithfully and with courage. Amen.



John Wyclif, the “Morning Star” of the Reformation

by Caroline Hodgson

The fourteenth-century English theologian and reformer John Wyclif is commemorated on Tuesday. An Oxford scholar, he was a pivotal figure in the prelude to the Protestant Reformation. His commitment to reforming the Church led him to challenge established doctrines and his ground-breaking translation of the Bible into English aimed to make scripture accessible to the ordinary person, challenging the Church’s monopoly on interpretation.

Wyclif criticised the wealth and corruption of the clergy, advocating for a return to the simplicity of early Christianity. His dissenting views earned both admiration and opposition, yet his legacy endured through the Lollards, his followers. Wyclif’s emphasis on the authority of the Bible and his uncompromising stance on the need for reform set the scene for profound changes within the Church, influencing other reformers such as Jan Hus and Martin Luther, and contributing to the transformation of Christianity in Europe. ☺

“ I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.”

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

A new take on the new year

by Caroline Hodgson

Are you fed up with resolutions you know you won’t be able to keep even before you’ve started? Rather than let yourself down this year, why not devote your energy to deciding on what’s actually achievable in the coming twelve months? At this point, your only resolution is to commit just a few minutes at regular intervals. What works for you? Could you spare a few minutes a day, or half an hour a week?

Apart from time, the only other thing you’ll need in the first instance is some kind

of notebook or a computer document. Start by using whatever time you’ve allocated to identifying and listing the things you want to change. Allow this process to be fairly leisurely, but do set challenges – give yourself, say, a fortnight to come up with a list. Then let it evolve into a workable action plan – flesh it out with details, write, or draw, or invite other people to take part with you.

As with everything, prayer is the key to doing this well. Ask for God’s guidance and support in your endeavours. What you are doing, in fact, is putting faith into practice – so make it realistic and enjoyable! ☺