

Family

Intro. Both my grandfathers died just after I was born so I never knew them. We lived next door to a retired couple from Chicago, Earl and Verna Rose. I was reminded of them when I read about Anna and Simeon in the gospel. The Roses were also wise and gentle people, with a good sense of humor. **He** taught my brothers and me a lot about using tools. We had a lot of pine trees around our house and were always raking needles. He showed me how to spend less time and energy using a lighter touch to rake the *needles*, not the *dirt*. **She** taught us about living well with a severe hearing loss. They were like grandparents to us and we grandchildren to them.

I. We don't know much about the Lord's extended family. Neither Joseph nor Mary's parents are mentioned nor is there much about Zechariah and Elizabeth, John the Baptizer's parents. They might have been at the special moments in the family's life in the early days, like the presentation. Although there was probably a small temple in

Bethlehem, the family traveled about five miles to the grand temple in Jerusalem. Due to the hills and valleys, not an easy trip for a new mother and a week-old baby. It was a small family group that gathered to complete the traditional Jewish rituals of birth. Luke uses the words, "the Law of Moses" *five* times in this passage. Luke does this to make clear that when Jesus became part of the human family, he followed the traditions of his people. He did not exempt himself from them. The young family couldn't afford the usual offering of a one-year-old lamb (Lev. 12:6); so they gave a pair of birds. We are told about two faith-filled people, Anna and Simeon, as regular in the temple *then* as the regulars at daily mass are *today* in any church. When they saw the child, they probably did what many of *us* do; they oohed and ahed over him. But there was more. Simeon prophesied about the future of the child Jesus. There was a less joyful prophecy for Mary's heart. It would be pierced with the pain of her child's suffering, an experience parents can easily understand. Anna, was a survivor. She

was married for just seven years and lived the next fifty years on her own. She dedicated her life to God and is the kind of woman who would run the gift shop and teach religious education at most churches today. She too talked about this special child.

This family, though called “Holy”, is not much different from our own families. Joseph and Mary worked hard in the family business. Joseph taught Jesus how to use the tools of carpentry. We are told of one incident during Jesus’ childhood about him going somewhere without telling his parents, scaring the dickens out of them and getting a scolding for it.

Concl. Some of you traveled out of town to visit children and grandchildren for the holidays. It wasn’t that long ago that families lived close by each other. Due to frequent job moves, especially the military in this area, it is increasingly rare that families live close to one another. In the absence of family we fill that desire in healthy and sometimes unhealthy ways. For better and worse, people in our

neighborhood, at work or school become extended “family.”
This “family” closes ranks in the difficult times and share the significant moments in each other’s lives. Throughout his life the Lord added to his “family” apostles and friends like Lazarus, Martha and Mary. We have been added to that extended family also. May we continue to grow and become strong, filled with wisdom and find favor with God.