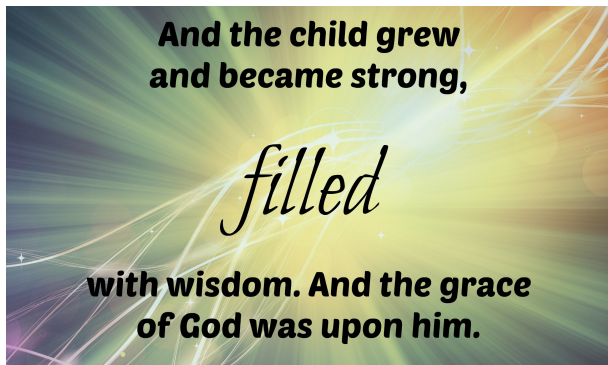


LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



www.orlaghinthecity.ie

**FEAST OF THE HOLY
FAMILY
28th December 2024**

Luke 2:41-52

Luke 2:41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹ He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Luke 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Jesus in the Temple is a story unique to Luke's gospel. Rather than an innocent reminiscence, the story bears the marks of post-Easter composition.

This deceptively simple tale serves several purposes of the evangelist.

- (i) It reminds us of the Jewishness of Jesus and his family.
- (ii) It fulfils one of the conventions of ancient biography: childhood prodigies.
- (iii) It begins the portrait of Jesus as a prophet and as a reader of Scripture.
- (iv) It portrays Jesus as a human being, experiencing the ordinary development from childhood onwards.
- (v) It shows Jesus himself taking "ownership" of all the things said of him thus far in the Infancy Narrative of Luke.

All five elements are significant for Luke. He is very likely writing against what we may call proto-Marcionism, that is the desire to uproot Jesus from his Jewish background, and behind that a desire to dismiss Judaism as somehow surpassed and superseded.

He may also be countering the beginnings of Apollinarianism, evident in other non-canonical accounts of Jesus' childhood. Typically, these so emphasise the divinity of the child Jesus that he seems hardly human. There is a considerable contrast, for example, with the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (you can find it here: www.gnosis.org).

Thought for the day

Today we have a chance to reflect on the mystery of our own families! It really is a bit of mystery, how we mostly come out okay from this most intense and formative of experiences. We receive so much that we really want to ponder and to treasure. We can also be burdened by attitudes and traits that we might well wish we were without. Yet, through it all, we are grateful. Family is our "first love" and never really loses its importance for us.

KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA—www.tarsus.ie

The story of Jesus being lost in the Temple is, like the story of his birth, all about his identity. At the age of twelve as a Jewish boy Jesus would have celebrated his bar mitzvah. This meant he was allowed to read the scriptures in the synagogue and was recognised as taking his place among the community of adult men. |As such it was his right that he should go to Jerusalem for Passover, but what unfolded there was an indication that his life would be given over to doing the will of his Father. For Mary this is another stage in her relationship with her son and another invitation to ponder how God is at work in her life.

SEAN GOAN—Let the Reader Understand, Year B

Prayer Reflection

Lord, we pray today for all those involved in the work of education

– parents, teachers, youth leaders, church ministers.

Young people come to stay with us and live under our authority for a time,

Increasing in wisdom, in stature and in favour with you and with men and women.

But they are not ours.

You are their father and they must be busy about your affairs.

Some have unusual vocations – in the Church perhaps, or in the arts, or in politics.

At times we will feel we have lost them and we will be overcome with worry as we spend days looking for them. Then,

quite unexpectedly, we find them, at ease in their temple, asking and answering questions,

quite surprised that we should be looking for them, while we remain perplexed at what it all means.

“It may be that the salvation of the world lies with the maladjusted.” ...Martin Luther King

Lord, there are times in life when we must step out on our own,

knowing that dear ones will be very worried, looking for us,

wanting to bring us back to Nazareth where we can be subject to them.

Give us the grace to commit ourselves, like Jesus,

to what we know to be our Father’s business.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL—Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels

We read that Jesus as a twelve-year old Jewish boy takes his commitment to Judaism quite seriously, remaining behind to converse with the teachers in the Temple who are ‘amazed’ at his understanding. We are not told anything further about Jesus’ adolescent years except that he ‘increased in wisdom’; with that observation we can assume that he continued to ask questions, learning from wise teachers and observing the signs of his times. Jesus was not zapped with sudden enlightenment. He had to study, mature and enter into deep reflection.

As a young person, Jesus is beginning to shape his identity. As with all families, this can cause difficulties. Parents want to protect their children, while adolescents want to explore and expand their horizons, and conflict often ensues. One must wonder if Mary’s heart sank at Jesus’ response to her “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” Today’s gospel is a reminder of how helpless we feel at times, when we must let God’s dream be dreamed in ourselves and in those we love.

Sometimes we have to let people we love walk their own path and follow the way God has set out for them. Can you recall experiences of this in your own life?

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLET—Go Deeper

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Luke’s skill as a storyteller comes through in the details of the story in a way with which many people can identify: the loss of a child, the frantic search, the seemingly offhand speech of the teenager. Let the drama of the story speak to you. Where do you find good news in it?
2. The distress of Mary and Joseph brings to mind the distress of many parents separated from their children in today’s world by social unrest, forced migration and other factors. How does the plight of these families speak to you?
3. In Luke’s Gospel this story serves to give a glimpse of the future greatness of Jesus, the teacher of his people. Sometimes we can look back over our own life, or the lives of others, and with hindsight can see in childhood or teenage years a glimpse of gifts and talents that were later to blossom. Where have you seen this?
4. “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” This seemingly insensitive reply by Jesus to Mary serves to highlight that in his life the mission given him by God would take precedence over family ties, painful though this would be. Perhaps you have known situations in your own life where there was pain for family members as you followed your own destiny? Where in the midst of the pain was the good news?

JOHN BYRNE OSA—Intercom

Today is the day of the Christian Family, a newly established feast to help Christian families understand, celebrate, deepen and live the spirit of Christ. It is not enough to defend only in theory the value of the family. Nor is it realistic to imagine the Holy Family of Nazareth as our model of the ideal traditional family. Following Jesus may at times demand that we question and transform models and habits that are deeply rooted in us.

For Jesus, the family isn’t something absolute or set in stone. Still more, it is not the nuclear human family that we must keep building in order to fulfil the desire of the only Father of us all. Jesus’ own parents will have to learn this lesson by undergoing misunderstandings and conflicts.

Only by delving into the profound meaning of his words and his behaviour towards his family, will we discover that his prime concern is the human family: a more fraternal, just and inclusive society, the way God wants it.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA—Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C