

## THE FINDING OF THE CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

### A. The story:

Every year during the feast of the Passover, the Holy Family went to Jerusalem.

St. Luke (1:42-50) relates the story of the trip when the twelve year old Jesus remains behind in Jerusalem. However, Mary and Joseph don't know this.

Mary thinks Jesus is with Joseph and Joseph thinks He is with Mary. This could easily happen, Saint Bede explains that *“the custom of the children of Israel while assembling at Jerusalem on the feast days, or returning to their homes, was for the women and men to go separately, and the infants or children to go with either parent indiscriminately. And so both Mary and Joseph each thought in turn that the Child Jesus, whom they saw not with them, was returning with the other parent.”*

Mary and Joseph do not notice He is missing until an entire day passes. They lost the Christ Child, their anxiety is total, spiritual and parental. When realizing He is not with either of them, they look for Him among their family and friends. They do not find Him so they quickly return to Jerusalem.

After three days, their anxiety turns to joy when they find Jesus *“sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom”* (Lk 2:46-47).

### B. The Doctors:

Saint Bede sees in His behavior with the Doctors in the Temple the manifestation of His two natures. *“To show that He was a man, He humbly listened to the masters; but to prove that He was God, He divinely answered those who spoke.”*

However here, the Child Jesus gives a great lesson regarding the conduct of children, *“because moreover He was the Son of God,”* tells Origen, *“He is found in the midst of the doctors, enlightening and instructing them. But because He was a little child, He is found among them not teaching but asking questions, as it is said, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And this He did as a duty of reverence, that He might set us an example of the proper behavior of children, though they be wise and learned, rather to hear their masters than teach them, and not to vaunt themselves with empty boasting. But He asked not that He might learn, but that asking He might instruct. For from the same source of learning is derived both the power of asking and answering wisely, as it follows, all who heard Him were astonished at His wisdom.”*

### C. Obedience:

Mary asks Him, *“Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing”* (Lk 2:48).

The child Jesus replies, *“How is it that you sought me? did you not know, that I must be about my father's business?”* (Luke 2:49).

Mary humbly accepts what He says to her. The Divine Child goes on to set a wonderful example. Our Lord, the King of Kings, goes home and is obedient to them.

Peace will penetrate our life when we follow the example of Jesus here and we become obedient first to God, then to Church authority and lastly to civil authority.

Following the example of our Lord here, is to be obedient first to God, to the authority of His Church and lastly to civil authority. Peace is the gift for true obedience. *“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's: and to God the things that are God's”*(Lk 20:25)

Just as she did at the Nativity, Mary, His mother “*kept all these words in her heart*” (Lk 2:51). “*And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men*” (Lk 2:52).

“*Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice*” (1 Sam. 15:22). That’s a truth to keep central as we enter this season of Lent. It’s possible to make a grandiose resolution and miss the reality at the heart of the season: We are to take on the image of Him Who “*humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross*” (Phil. 2:8).

Jesus was twelve years old and stayed behind in Jerusalem following a family trip there, without notifying his parents. After three days of anxious searching Mary and Joseph finally found Him in the Temple.

“*Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.*” And he said to them, “*How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?*”

“*And they did not understand the saying which He spoke to them. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man*” (Lk 2:48-52).

“*He was subject to them,*” explains Saint Anthony. “*With these words, all pride dissolve, all rigidity crumble, all disobedience submit. Who was subject to them? In brief, He who created all things from nothing; He who, as Isaiah says, ‘has cupped in His hand the waters of the sea and marked off the heavens with a span; Who has held in a measure the dust of the earth, weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance’ (40,12). This is He who, great and powerful though He be, was subject. And subject to whom? To a workman and a poor young maid.*”

There are people of wisdom within religious orders, but it is by means of simple men that God brought them there. God chose the foolish and weak, the lowly and ignorant to bring together those who were wise, powerful and of noble birth through them, “*so that no human being might boast in itself*” (1 Cor. 1,26-29), but in Him Who came down, Who came to Nazareth, and Who was subject to authorities.

#### D. “Seek, and you shall find” (Mt 7:7):

To Mary and Joseph, the Divine Child was lost. Their anxiety is first a spiritual anxiety, the anxiety of holy souls who seek for the presence of the Lord, when they suffer and do not feel Him in their spiritual life.

Origen explains the very meaning of this mystery: “*Learn where those who seek Him find Him, not everywhere, but in the temple. And do you then seek Jesus in the temple of God. Seek Him in the Church, and seek Him among the masters who are in the temple. For if you wilt so seek Him, you shall find Him. They found Him not among His kinsfolk, for human relations could not comprehend the Son of God; not among His acquaintance, for He passes far beyond all human knowledge and understanding. Where then do they find Him? In the temple! If at any time you seek the Son of God, seek Him first in the temple, thither go up, and verily shall you find Christ, the Word, and the Wisdom, i.e. the Son of God.*”

Seek, and you shall find our Lord in His Temple, in His doctrine, in the ministers he chose to guide us. Mary and Joseph found Him, as did little Samuel (1:3 sq.) in the Temple of God.

Frequent visits to His Temple, regular attendance at Mass during the week, meditation and spiritual readings are the keys to find our Lord Jesus Christ and to remain constantly in His presence.