

Family

December 26, 2021, The Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Gospel of Luke 2:41-52

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Even if we are not mothers ourselves we can certainly empathize with Mary's statement, *'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.'*

I remember when I was little, the feeling I had when I lost sight of Mom at the fair where there were crowds of people. It was only for a few moments but they were a few moments of panic and fear. And I'm sure Mom felt the same although she may well have known where I was all along. I just didn't see her. The same panic runs through a parent particularly a mother at the mere thought of losing a child in whatever circumstance.

You might say Jesus' actions hurt Mary, giving her deep anxiety over her not knowing where her son was. Did Jesus commit a sin? Not in obeying the will of the Father. And by his response, it seems he assumed she would have known this.

*'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my father's house?'*

It appears Jesus was unaware that Mary didn't know he was in his father's house, something he assumed she would have known so therefore not required to let her know first.

We are reminded here that Jesus' life involves obedience to more than earthly parents. But Luke is quick to point out that Jesus had not cast aside his obedience to his earthly parents. Ultimately, doing the will of the Father also includes obedience to Mary and Joseph which is how today's Gospel passage ends.

The episode today is an interesting commentary on our own human feelings especially concerning our relationships. We love our kids. We want the best for them. It hurts parents when the kids behave in such a way that gives the parents anxiety. We don't like the way it makes us feel and it's an automatic human response to get upset with the person who made us feel that way, especially when we think they should have known better.

One might say Jesus made a mistake. He assumed too much here. To err is human and Jesus is indeed human. There are other episodes in Scripture where he also got angry from time to time and even threw stuff.

We do hurt each other by word and deed. Sometimes intentionally out of anger and spite, which would be a sin, but even unintentionally. Jesus did not intentionally hurt his parents but we see the very humanness of the Holy Family in this episode. **Holiness is not without trials and misunderstandings.**

It is not hard to imagine Mary and Joseph initially thinking Jesus may be wandering among the safety of extended family and friends as they left Jerusalem for Nazareth. You would not necessarily see that today as families and communities are not as large or closely knit. Today there are many more protective measures in place and children in particular are closely monitored at every turn. Community trust abounded in the context of the pilgrimage to and from Jerusalem but things are different today particularly in our present culture and society.

Nevertheless by the end of the first day they may have started to pay attention to his absence but after 3 days they were very likely frantic.

We don't know exactly why they went back to the temple. Perhaps they were going there to pray. Perhaps they had an inkling he would be there. We don't know. But we know that we can relate to such a thing happening in our lives and the Holy Family was not immune.

It is **struggle and sacrifice that have the power** to form and strengthen bonds between people. People are closer to each other in hard times and in good. There is nothing like hardship to bring people together. This is more depth to relationships that have weathered some storms.

As we ponder Mary and Joseph frantically looking for Jesus, their primary responsibility in life and the mission given by God - - imagine yourself in your search for meaning, in your drive to follow up you're your call, your vocation, - - it is a way of looking anxiously for Him in our daily lives. Do we look for the presence of Christ in our parents? Do we look for it in our children?

By this early episode in Jesus' earthly life, we see one who is already showing signs of his identity and close relationship with God. Yet he is also a child who is learning through human experience.

Joseph is the father, the protector wisdom of the family, and Mary the mother with authority and gentleness and the child who reverences the mother and father's authority.

The family is a fundamental gift created by God to provide the best and safest journey through live for everyone.

Family helps us with our identity but also provides us with a sanctuary, a purpose even though our journeys may take us from home. Our families are still foundational to our wellbeing and give us home fires so important for our rest and sense of well being.

We pray for those families fractured by separation, dysfunction, trauma, illness, suicide, that there may find inner healing and restoration of relationships.

And for those who seem to have no one, that they may find in their path people who they can consider family, people they trust implicitly, people who truly care what happens to them. **May we be among those people.**

We pray in thanksgiving for the gift of our families and for the flourishing in whatever form it takes, and especially for our families here at St. Cecilia.