

## ***Holy Family 2021***

### **Luke 2:41-52**

The final incident of Luke's infancy narrative takes place in the temple of Jerusalem. This is where his gospel began and where it will end. It is the only gospel story about the ***childhood of Jesus***. It is significant for its own sake and for its relationship to the rest of Luke's work.

Since Simeon spoke his prophecy over the child and its mother, twelve years have passed. We know that in those years, the child grew to maturity, was filled with wisdom, and enjoyed God's favor. Each year, as was expected of a devout family to travel to Jerusalem for the Passover. But when he was twelve years old, the age when a Jewish boy was obliged to observe the Law, ***he did not return with his parents***.

We get a glimpse of what family-life may have been like in Jesus' early years, including trips to Jerusalem for important feasts. No surprises, except for the simple fact that if the child was exceptional, *someone would have mentioned something*. Many important people in Jewish history have outstanding births and childhoods, for example, Moses. Not so for Jesus, even though this is not surprising, since he was like us in all things, but sin. The author, Girzone, of the "Joshua" series, pointed out this fact in the beginning of his book, "Never Alone," that Jesus was just like everyone else in his hometown. He found telling and even reassuring.

Jesus did not return with his parents on this occasion, and the answer he gave them was exceptional, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that ***I must be in my Father's house?***" Obviously, they didn't! "They did not understand what he said to them." They were clueless. But he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

Mary, ***she kept all these things in her heart***. What a wonderful attitude to have for such an exceptional son as the angel Gabriel and Simeon foretold

to her. At this point in Jesus' life, there was no indication until now of her son's future, nor is there for ours. How many times my own mother waited up for us at night, my brothers and sisters and myself until we came home safe. "A sword of sorrow would pierce her heart" may certainly have been true at many juncture of Jesus' life but especially at the foot of the cross. All mothers have to go through the growing pains *with* their children, especially in their teenage years, and Jesus was just turning into a teen. But all mothers at one point have to let their children go.

One of my mother's favorite poets was Kahlil Gibran, and especially the following poem that he wrote in his book, "The Prophet."

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth. The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might that his arrows may go swift and far. Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness; for even as He loves the arrow that lies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.

Mary and Joseph were the bow which God bent with his might that his arrow, Jesus, continues to fly even to this day. May we put up no resistance to this arrow of love that wants only to pierce our hearts through this baby we celebrate today, so that tomorrow God's will through us may be done, wonderfully.