

## Week 9: *Finding Jesus in the Temple*

### Read

- Luke 2:41-52

### Pray

Pray one decade of the Rosary, focusing on Finding Jesus in the Temple. Travel with the Holy Family to the Passover celebration at the temple. Begin the journey home with Mary and Joseph. Experience total **loss** and devastation when Jesus is not found. Pause in this sorrow. Now, find Jesus in the temple. Experience His presence after losing Him for a time. Has He (or your perception of Him) changed? Have you? Prayerfully reflect on *The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple* (attached), or enter into your own reflection.

### Enter into the Scene

1. Encounter Mary as she grows and blooms through the many seasons of motherhood. Imagine her transitioning from being the mother of an infant to being the mother of a toddler, living in Egypt, apart from all that is familiar and comfortable. Does she intuitively know exactly what infant-Jesus or toddler-Jesus needs to develop, or does she learn with experience and repetition? Is she able to find companionship or shared experiences with other young mothers, or is her situation completely unlike that of others? Continue to consider Mary as Jesus grows from a small child to an older child, teen, and young adult. How do you think she feels as Jesus grows and becomes more independent? Does their relationship change or mature? How? How does Mary change in her expression of motherhood?
2. Imagine the familial interactions between Jesus and His parents. How do Mary and Joseph foster and encourage Jesus's growth? How does Jesus nourish and guide the growth of His parents? Imagine having dinner at the table of the Holy Family. What is their conversation like? How do they work together as a family – whether in their trade (carpentry) or in the basic chores of home life? Do they learn more about each other or grow closer together in ordinary daily tasks and activities? Are the dynamics of Holy Family similar to and/or different from your own personal experience of family?

### Reflect

1. The account of the dialoged between Jesus and His parents after He is found in the Temple includes this insight about Mary and Joseph: "But they did not understand what he said to them" (Lk 2:50). Do you ever sense Jesus's direction or hear His call but have difficulty understanding His purpose or the details of His plan? How can Mary be a resource to you in seasons of darkness or as you encounter the unknown?
2. Mary "kept all of these things in her heart" (Lk 2: 51). Mary seems to treasure both the easy and the difficult aspects of motherhood and the spiritual life. How does she treasure that which she does not fully understand? What difficult or confusing circumstances am I invited to embrace or treasure?
3. At the end of the account of Jesus being found in the Temple, we find this final sentence about Jesus's childhood: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God" (Lk 2:52). What do you think this verse means? The attached reflection suggests that Jesus allowed Himself to grow in His experience of humanity, rather than to assume or impose Himself upon the world. Why?



## Reflection: *The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple*

So little is known about Your early life, about what events and intricacies spanned the time between Your infancy and public ministry. The fragments of Your early life mentioned in scripture are illusive. Yet, the sparse details call me to wonder about Your youth rather than just skip over it.

Just shortly after Your presentation, an angel appeared to Joseph and warned him not to return home, but to flee to Egypt and wait there. I encounter Your Mother here, journeying again. As she traveled to visit Elizabeth in Judah and to Your nativity in Bethlehem, now she journeys with You and Joseph to live your early years in Egypt. It is as if something about Her love for You propels her to move forward. I imagine Her journey with You tucked safely beneath the fabric of her mantle.

Mary is both active and contemplative. Externally She is active, moving forward in the will of Her Heavenly Father through the direction of Her earthly spouse. And internally She is fully consumed with You, tucked quietly beneath the folds of Her garment, cradled against Her breast and heart as She journeys.

Your Holy Family lives the earliest months and years of Your life as immigrants, as refugees fleeing political oppression, as people who have left the familiarity of their homeland to live on foreign soil. You grow here, in this imperfect context. You grow as You were born, in humble, less than average conditions. You, God incarnate, allow Yourself to grow. Rather than assume or impose, You grow.

In some way, Your parents must foster Your growth. This remains a mystery to those of us who are looking in on Your early years. In what ways did Your parents teach You, or nurture You? In what ways did You teach and nurture them? The scriptures tell us that You were obedient to Your parents (Lk 2:51). So in that respect, Your family structure could not have been totally unlike that of other families. And yet, how very different you three must have been.

At some point, Your exile is complete. An angel appears to Joseph in a dream and Your family is lead back to Nazareth. You journey again, out of Egypt to the land of promise. You continue to grow, to “advance in wisdom and age” (Lk 2:52) under the care of Your parents.

For the Feast of the Passover You travel, this year as every year before, to the temple. You are 12, not yet an adult, but no longer a child. The celebration reaches completion, and Your family and friends depart. But You stay; You linger behind in the house of Your Father.

After an entire day of travel, Your parents realize that You are not with them, You are not with their caravan of friends and fellow travelers. “With great anxiety,” Your Mother searches for You. Perhaps She longs for the days of travel when You were still tucked beneath Her cloak. Perhaps She second guesses Herself, or fears that She made some mistake to have lost You. For 3 days, as the 3 days of Your death, She is devastated and lost without You.

Your parents find You, exactly where they left You, where they offered You in Your infancy – in the temple, on the (metaphoric) alter of Your Father’s will. You are teaching, but also being taught – asking and answering questions. You, the God who allows yourself to grow, also allows yourself to learn and be taught.

When Your parents come to You, they are astonished and perplexed. Your Mother says, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for You with great anxiety.” You reply to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” They do not understand You or Your meaning, at least not as fully as they wish. They will learn and grow with You.

*Jesus, with great anxiety I seek You. How I wish I could keep You always safely tucked beneath my cloak and beside my heart. But that is not always Your will. I do not always understand You, or Your purpose, but I long to grow and learn beside You, humbly, as You grow and learn into adulthood.*

**JOYFULLY PROCLAIMING, CELEBRATING, WITNESSING, AND SERVING** *Together*