

[Readings: Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Psalm 128; Colossians 3:12-21; Luke 2:22-40]

Have you ever lost something that's really important to you, or really valuable to you, or really necessary, and you think about that feeling you get when you lose something or even misplace something. It's just that sinking, gut-wrenching, anxious feeling.

In today's reading, Mary and Joseph managed to lose Jesus. Every parent has had the experience of turning around and their kid isn't there and the kid's wandered off and the parents panic. Now, imagine you've been entrusted with the Son of God. And all of a sudden, you've lost Him. What do you think Mary and Joseph were thinking? What do you think they were feeling? What do you think that experience was like? Mary saying to Joseph, "I thought He was with YOU!" And Joseph saying in return: "I thought He was with YOU!" Then they both look up to the sky and hear a mighty peal of thunder from You Know Who!

The first lesson for us to learn today is that we lose God in our lives all the time, and we don't have any of that anxiety. It happens all the time. We literally lose God, walk away from God, we abandon God, we betray God, in little things or big things. We don't have that anxiety. In fact, we may be downright indifferent. And Satan chuckles, rubs his hands together, and goes looking for his next victim.

Joseph and Mary go searching for Jesus. Imagine what kind of a panicked search that would have been, and then they find Him in the temple. We read that after three days, they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them, asking them questions, and all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and his answers. Most lost children are found within three days. From three to ten days, the search and rescue mission becomes a search and recovery mission.

So, what do we see here? Even at 12 years old, Jesus has this incredible clarity. He has this incredible wisdom and this wisdom, this clarity, is on display here and in a very, very public place. But when Mary and Joseph see Him, we read, they were astonished.

That leads me to think that this is the first time that Jesus has displayed this incredible insight, clarity, wisdom in public because Joseph and Mary were astonished. Parents, have you ever had the experience of something profound coming from the lips of your children? "Did my kid say that?" Recognize that wisdom sometimes comes out of the mouths of children.

The Blessed Mother of Jesus asks Him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." But Jesus' response is calm, it's measured. He says them, "How is it that you sought me, did you not know that I would be in my father's house?"

So, it just seemed incredibly natural to Him, why? Because Jesus, in His essence, is God, and God can't be lost. So, Jesus wasn't thinking, "I'm lost," because God can't be lost. His parents might have been thinking He was lost. The rest of the people traveling with him might have been thinking He was lost. But the reality was and is, God can't be lost. He wasn't lost. He didn't feel lost. He was calm. He was not anxious. He wasn't lost.

And so, sometimes in our lives, when we think something or someone else is lost, the reality is that WE are the ones that are lost. WE are the ones that have lost something. Mary and Joseph had lost something. But Jesus was not lost, and the overwhelming theme of the reading is that Mary and Joseph were very intentionally searching for Jesus, very intensely searching for God.

Today's Gospel message is an invitation to renew that search in our lives. I think the danger, or the trap, the temptation is to think, "Oh yeah, I sort of know about God. I sort of know about faith." And then we stop searching. We stop seeking God really actively, intentionally. And then it's just so easy to become average, and mediocre, and lukewarm in all things spiritual. So, today's Gospel is an invitation to go searching for God, and His truth, and His wisdom in new ways this week. How do we find God in our own families?

Our Readings for the Feast of the Holy Family give us practical guidelines for parent/child and all relationships

Check out the Scripture citations for today's three readings. Sit down as a family and discuss them today or sometime this week. How your family measure

up to what the Word of God does is calling you to be?

Our Catholic teaching says that every household is a domestic church, a “mini-church,” just as we have mini-marts and mini-malls. On this Holy Family Sunday, we are commanded to believe and to love as Christ loves. We do have the tools to become a Holy Family in our own right. In our search for God, let us pray for the will and the wisdom to use them wisely.

It is fashionable to blame our parents for the people we have become. We inherited their weaknesses and economic status. We were socialized into their worst habits. Yet, all of us have the finest role model possible to whom we can appeal: Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Happy hunting! AMEN!