

*Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?*

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Epiphany means “manifestation”, and so this season focuses on the manifestation of Jesus Christ as the Word and Wisdom of God to all people, but especially to the Gentiles. It was prophesied in the Old Testament that God will open up the Kingdom of Heaven to all people, and the Church wishes to show us this as Our Lord’s mission from His earliest years. At our Lord’s birth, he drew the shepherds to Him, those from the marginalized and blue collar levels of the ancient Jewish society. He called also to Himself the wise men, Gentile holy men, philosophers and astronomers. Today we hear that Jesus has again drawn wise men to Himself, but this time the righteous and learned Doctors of the Temple.

In today’s Gospel the boy Jesus, at the age of 12, astonishes the rabbis and professors of His day with His learning. The Tradition of the Church reveals that Jesus was seated in the midst of them not necessarily to learn from them, but enthroned, seated with honor and the doctors of the Law, the Doctors of Theology of His day listen to *Him*. The Gospel says that He both *heard them and asked them questions*. The rabbis taught and still teach primarily by asking questions which we call the Socratic method, and we can infer from the Gospel that Jesus is teaching in the same way. Not only is His knowledge astonishing, but what is even more amazing is how he presents His learning. The Gospels do not record what the Lord discussed with them, the Tradition of the Church says that He discussed the Law and the Prophets. Regardless of the topic, Jesus shows a wisdom and understanding beyond His years.

Now, we must remember that in spite of Our Lord being fully divine, He grew up and matured just as every human child does. He learned by being taught, and He was taught primarily by His Holy Mother, His earthly father St. Joseph, and of course by God the Father. We cannot know how the mind of Jesus worked since He was and is in union with God the Father, and so the nature of His learning and knowledge we must accept as a mystery. The Scriptures reveal to us that Jesus is the Word and Wisdom of God, so regardless of His human nature, it should be no surprise to us that He astonishes the rabbis in the Temple with His questions and conclusions.

Jesus must have been a unique child. After all He is fully God and fully human. He grew and played just as every child does. However, His mother, even though she is the Blessed Virgin Mary is only human, and very much a human mother. As Jesus sat in the Temple astonishing the doctors of the Temple, His mother had been running around frantically searching for Him, having lost her only beloved Son for three days and nights. How she lost him should surprise us since they would have traveled to Jerusalem with their large extended family. His elder cousins and friends would have been charged with the supervision of Jesus and those of his age. But even with a large family, lose Him, she did. She spent three days and three nights looking for him,

imagine her worry! Those three days and three nights would probably come back to haunt her when her Son laid in the tomb for three days. Mary and Joseph are amazed to find Jesus seated in the Temple with the great Temple Doctors. Yet it must have been with tears in her eyes that she says, *Why have you dealt so with us, behold we have sought you sorrowing.* Which in modern language translates loosely into *Why have you done this to us? Did you not know we were looking for you? We have searched everywhere for you!* And Jesus answers her *did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* The very first recorded words of Jesus are not *mama* or *dada* but, *did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* Such an answer would probably get a twelve year old today in trouble. But here we are given a first glimpse of the will of Jesus. He is not disrespectful to His parents, but He is revealing that even at twelve years old, His will is united to the will of God the Father.

*Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* Mary's little boy is growing up and His first recorded words make it known that He intends to do exactly what God the Father wills. Even though Jesus is Divine Wisdom, God in the flesh, whose will and the Father's Will are one, the Gospel reads that He submitted Himself to His parents. *He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.* Jesus shows us that it is possible to do our Heavenly Father's will and to be primarily about His business and also to honor and obey humbly and dutifully our earthly parents, our Bishops, and those set over us. His service to God the Father moves Him to submit to His earthly parents. He will do the Father's will and in honoring His earthly mother and stepfather show them and us what it means. The fruit of this obedience is that the young Jesus *increased in wisdom, and in stature, and found favor with God and man.* We find in Jesus, even at the age of twelve years old the perfect example of union with God's Will and obedience.

In the next couple of weeks we will hear of the Baptism of Jesus where God the Father says to us *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,* and again at the marriage in Cana from His Holy Mother, *whatsoever He tells you to do, do it.* Jesus is the manifestation of God's Wisdom, Will, and salvation. He is the manifestation of total obedience to God the Father. He is the manifestation to us of every virtue that God wishes to instill in us. God has given us the perfect example in Jesus Christ from the very beginning of His earthly life to His ascension into heaven. May we strive to be more like Him. Amen.