

Holy Family C

There were three important feasts for the Jews, the Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. Many Jews used to go to Jerusalem for one of these feasts. The Holy Family used to go for the Passover, the greatest of the three. Nazareth is just some eighty miles from Jerusalem. For the trip they used to go several families together; the journey took four or five days. Coming back to Nazareth, Jesus stayed in Jerusalem without the permission of his parents. They used to travel in two groups, one of men and another of women, and the children could go with either. Mary and Joseph thought that Jesus was part of the other group. It is easy to think that God is with us, but it is more important to ask ourselves if we are with God.

When they realised Jesus wasn't there, they returned to Jerusalem. After three days, they found him in the temple. One day leaving Jerusalem, another returning, and on the third day, early in the morning, he was where he should be, at the temple in Jerusalem. For the Jews the temple was everything. It was where God was. Jesus wanted to be closer to his Father God, to spend time where he could feel his presence. Do we try to find the best place to encounter God? Do I know the fastest way to connect with Him? Have I found the best hot spot? It is important to have a desire to be with God, to find the peace and joy that only God can give us.

We can imagine the distress and anxiety of his parents. They were supposed to look after him and they lost him. Why did Jesus do that? He was twelve years old, the age when they were supposed to go to Jerusalem once a year. For us he was still a boy; for their society he was a young man. He wanted to teach them a lesson and to find answers to many of his questions. They found him talking to the religious leaders of the time. We too need to ask questions and find out the meaning of our lives, what we are here for.

Jesus' mother complained: "Why did you do that?" He answered them, a bit perplexed: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" He must have put on that beautiful smile that his mother loved, just to soften his words. He told them that the temple was his place, that he came to earth to do the will of his Father. This should be our attitude in front of things that separate us from God. We should ask ourselves this question: Is this helping me to become closer to God? If the answer is in the negative, we should get rid of it. This should be the benchmark that measures everything we do.

The Gospel says that they didn't understand him, but Mary kept all these things in her heart. She was pondering everything, trying to find out what it meant, what God wanted her to do. There are many things in our lives that we don't understand, and many times we rebel and we get upset with God, because he is not doing what we want him to do. Better the attitude of Mary: to reflect on what all this means. God has a reason for everything and everything is part of his plan, immersed in the great scheme of things. We are just a little speck of dust in his universe. All we need to do is contemplate how God is acting in our lives.