

I EPIPHANY 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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ROM. 12.1 ST. LUKE 2.41



Young mother frantically searches for missing eight-year-old son...asks neighbor to help in the search...finds son at Sears looking at all the amazing toys...mother is relieved at finding son safe...and then upset he put her through the ordeal.

There is another part to the story. In order to get to Sears...the young son had to cross a busy street and the mighty Rock Island Line railroad tracks.

You might have guessed the young son in the story is none other than an eight-year-old boy who seems to have the same name as mine...and yes...once she calmed down mom had a good long talk with her son!

Most parents do everything they can to keep their children safe and out of harm's way. We read and hear about missing children all the time...we hope and pray they are found safe and return home.

We can only imagine what must have been going through the minds of Mary and Joseph when they discovered Jesus was missing from their group. Electronic Amber Alerts didn't exist. Where to begin looking for the missing Jesus?

The Holy Family lived in Nazareth...a small town about 70 miles from Jerusalem. Observant Jews were expected to make every effort to travel to Jerusalem for Passover...every year if they lived nearby...or at least once in their lifetime if they lived far away.

Mary and Joseph and Jesus went to Jerusalem every year for Passover. They traveled with a large group of family and friends...it was safer than traveling alone...and those of us who travel know having family and friends to share the experience with can be a lot of fun.

After Passover...Mary and Joseph began the journey home...it would have taken them about five days to travel from Jerusalem to Nazareth. They had already travelled a full day when they discovered Jesus was missing...and spent another day travelling back to Jerusalem.

The Gospel tells us when Mary and Joseph got back to Jerusalem they spent another three days looking for Jesus in the crowds still in town after Passover. The story does have a happy ending...they found him in the Temple having a deep theological conversation with the teachers...who were impressed by his knowledge.

Mary now does the talking...relieved and probably a good bit annoyed at Jesus for scaring the wits out of her and Joseph. We don't get an apology from Jesus...instead he tells his mom they shouldn't have been worried about him...they should have known he was busy doing work in his Father's house...God's house...the Temple.

The epiphanies...the striking appearances...in the Gospel are in the way Jesus reveals himself to the teachers in the Temple...able to hold his own in conversation...and in what he reveals about himself to his parents and ultimately to us. Jesus shows his mission to do God's work might at times come into conflict with the wishes of his parents. Mary and Joseph don't understand what Jesus means...at least not yet.

Today's Gospel gives us the only glimpse of the adolescent Jesus...and this is the last time Joseph is mentioned in the Scriptures. One question we would all like answered...what did Jesus do when he returned to Nazareth with his parents after being AWOL for four days? Did he hang out with other kids...did he spend time in prayer...probably both!

Saint Luke tells us when Jesus returned to Nazareth with his parents he was obedient to them. Jesus knew he was God's Son...he also knew the authority Mary and Joseph had over him...authority given to them by God...he was willing to submit to that authority until the time came for him to complete his mission.

We too have a mission: to learn what God's will is for us and then commit ourselves to lives of joyful obedience to his will. Knowing what God's will is for us is only possible when we regulate our lives around prayer...in church and at home.

We too must be about our Father's business.

