



Daily Reflections

December 30, 2018

Scripture

Luke 2: 41-52

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover,
and when he was twelve years old,
they went up according to festival custom.
After they had completed its days, as they were returning,
the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem,
but his parents did not know it.
Thinking that he was in the caravan,
they journeyed for a day
and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances,
but not finding him,
they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.
After three days they found him in the temple,
sitting in the midst of the teachers,
listening to them and asking them questions,
and all who heard him were astounded
at his understanding and his answers.
When his parents saw him,
they were astonished,
and his mother said to him,
"Son, why have you done this to us?
Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."

And he said to them,
"Why were you looking for me?
Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"
But they did not understand what he said to them.
He went down with them and came to Nazareth,
and was obedient to them;
and his mother kept all these things in her heart.
And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor
before God and man.

Our Scripture Reflection

Today in the Church we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. We need strong faith-filled families. Why? Because the family is the "concrete" of our society. However, certain bizarre social movements rooted in a gross misunderstanding of the gift of human sexuality are tearing at the very fiber of our families. This day, this Feast is crucial. Please pray that families, and the marriages from which they are born will remain strong and faithful to God. Through our rock-solid families, may our troubled world experience the love and healing power of God.

Food for your Journey

Completely ignored by most biblical commentators, and usually by pastors, is the emotional trauma of the mothers. Hannah, seen from a mother's point of view, must have endured an unbearable horror to even think of taking her toddler to the temple and abandoning him there. Both mother and child could be traumatized for life. The Hebrew writers make it acceptable because Hannah had other children. But every mother knows that other children can never make up for the loss of one child. Even though she wanted to carry out her promise to God, the trauma of doing it should not be ignored.

Was the adult Samuel's childhood trauma the root of his mostly negative prophecies against sin? Jesus' teaching was mostly positive, standing for righteousness. His expertise was in debate: answering the legalists with unanswerable questions. This gift was obviously formed and nurtured at an early age.

My grandmother was raised in the Ozarks. She said she was taught that she should not love her children too much because some of them would probably die. This emotional disconnection caused a lifetime of anger between her and my mother. How much more terrible, from a woman's standpoint, that Hannah abandoned her small child, barely weaned and still dependent, in a strange place with an old man whose own sons were disasters.

Still, Hannah is an example for mothers. The only peace we can have is to continually surrender our children to God, knowing we cannot fully protect them from a violent world. Our faith must be in God's care for us and our little ones when we can't be with them. The new identity-forming for adults is the new life of trust in God. Even though Jesus was older, his mother must also have been terrified, even hysterical, during those three days without him, perhaps thinking he might be lost, wandering the streets of Jerusalem or possibly captured by slave traders. Jesus obviously expected them to know he was in the temple. But for three days? He was only interested in the Torah, forgetting his parents, characteristic for preteens who can't remember what day it is. Perhaps he was already seeing the flaws in a legalistic religion, without the Spirit to give it life. Debate over the Torah is still a characteristic of Judaism. Remember the song "If I Were A Rich Man"(Fiddler on the Roof)? Spiritual status for men was connected with discussing the Torah all day in the temple. The teaching or debate may have been so intense that they didn't notice the passing of time.

Even though Jesus returned with his family, Mary undoubtedly began to recognize that she could not live in fear for her son — she must trust God to care for him.

—Judy Romero-Oak.

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear God, I thank You for the gift of my family. I thank You for the gift of my parents who lovingly brought me into this world. As Jesus, Mary and Joseph loved, respected and cared for one another, help me to do the same for my family. Together, may we reveal Your love to the world. Amen