Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 2:41-52): Each year his 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.

«They found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers... and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding»

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Today, we are given to contemplate, as a continuation of the Mystery of Incarnation, God's Son's insertion into the human community par excellence; the family, and Jesus' progressive education by Joseph and Mary. As the Gospel says, “And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.” (Lk 2:52).

The book Jesus, son of Sirach, reminds us that “For the Lord sets a father in honor over his children and confirms a mother’s authority over her sons” (Sir 3:2). Jesus is twelve years old and He already shows the good education He has received at His Nazarene home. His wisdom no doubt reflects the Holy Spirit's action, but also Joseph and Mary's undeniably good educational know-how. Mary and Joseph's affliction and anxiety attest to their educative solicitude and their loving concern for Jesus.

We need not make great efforts to see that today, more than ever before, it is necessary for the family to strongly assume the teaching mission God has entrusted to it. To educate is to introduce to reality, and only parents who live this reality with a meaning can accomplish this. Christian parents must educate through Christ, source of all significance and wisdom.

It is very difficult to remedy shortcomings in home education. What is not learned at home can only be learned with great difficulty elsewhere. The virtues Joseph and Mary constantly practiced at their Nazarene home were lived and learned by Jesus naturally; spirit of service to God and men, piety, love for work well done, caring for one another, respect, horror of sin... To grow up as Christians, children need examples and, if their parents give these, these children will be very fortunate.

Today, we must all go and look for Christ's wisdom to bring it to our families. Origin, an early Church Father, when commenting on today's Gospel, said that whoever is looking for Christ, must not seek Him in a negligent and careless way, as those who do not succeed in finding Him do. We must look for Him with “anxiety”, with great solicitude, as Joseph and Mary did.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The lesson of silence: may there return to us an appreciation of this stupendous and indispensable spiritual condition. O silence of Nazareth, teach us recollection and interior life.” (Saint Paul VI)

- “The Lord entered the world humbly. He grew like a normal child, he had the trial of work, as well as the trial of the cross. At the end, he rose again. The Lord teaches us that in life not all is magic, that triumphalism is not Christian.” (Francis)

- “During the greater part of his life Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labor. His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God, a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was "obedient" to his parents and that he ‘increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man’ (Lk 2,51:52).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 531)