

Saturday's Gospel: Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Gospel for Saturday after the Second Sunday after Pentecost, feast of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 2:41-51*)

Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the

boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously." And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. And

he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

Commentary

Today we celebrate in the Church the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Hearts of Jesus and Mary were wonderfully united from the moment of the Incarnation. The Church teaches us that the surest way to reach Jesus is through Mary. Pope Pius XII established this feast for the entire Church on 4 May 1944. Through Mary's intercession we ask for "peace among nations, freedom for the Church, the conversion of sinners, the love of purity and the practice of virtue" (Decree of May 4, 1944).

In today's Gospel passage, the Holy Family travels to the Temple of Jerusalem. They do so out of devotion. The Law of Moses obliged the men of Israel to appear before the Lord three times a year: at Passover, at Pentecost, and at the Feast of Tabernacles. This duty did not affect women or children before they turned 13. Furthermore, in Jesus' time only those who lived less than a day's journey away usually made this pilgrimage, and normally only for the feast of Passover. Since the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem required a number of days, Joseph was not strictly bound by the precept either. However, both he and Mary went to Jerusalem every year for the Passover (cf. *Lk* 2:41).

On the way back, men and women traveled separately. Children could join either group. Mary and Joseph realized that Jesus was missing and,

distraught, they looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances. On failing to find him, perhaps that same night they returned to Jerusalem. On the third day of searching they found him in the Temple, sitting in the middle of the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. “And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.”

Our Lady and her Spouse were also amazed. But their astonishment was not due to the wisdom of his answers, but because it was the first time that something like this had happened: Jesus, who was always so obedient, had stayed in Jerusalem without telling them.

“Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.’ And he said to them, ‘How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I

must be in my Father's house?" But they didn't understand his answer.

Jesus wants to reveal the mysterious depth of his intimacy with the Father, something Mary senses but doesn't know how to connect with the trial Jesus has put them through. Upon receiving that answer, without understanding it Mary and Joseph obeyed God's plans, with complete humility and docility. They returned to Nazareth, and Jesus "was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart."

It is a lesson for all Christians, inviting us to accept with love the manifestations of divine Providence even when sometimes we fail to understand them. The heart of Mary is completely united to the heart of Jesus. She doesn't understand, but she trusts because she knows that God's plans are always much bigger than ours. Let us ask Mary to have a

heart like hers, always ready to
accept God's will.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for
us!

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