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Meditations: Tuesday after the Epiphany

Some reflections that can spur our prayer during these days of the Christmas season.

- Searching for Jesus, with Mary and Joseph
- When we have lost Jesus
- Broadening our outlook of faith.

THROUGHOUT THIS LITURGICAL TIME, we have lived with the Holy Family, accompanying Jesus while he takes his first steps on this earth. We were servants in Mary's house; we

listened in awe to the message of the archangel Gabriel; we accompanied our Lady on her journey to her cousin's home. Saint Joseph let us enter his own home when he took Mary as his wife; we were able to be with them in Bethlehem, that blessed night when Almighty God lay in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes; we offered the Child our little treasures, together with those important people from the East. That same night we were awakened by the holy Patriarch, who alerted us to the imminent danger. With Mary, Joseph and the Child we were strangers in Egypt until being able to return to Nazareth.

Time went by. *Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man (Lk 2:52)*. When he was twelve years old, his parents took him to Jerusalem to celebrate the solemn feast of the Passover (cf. *Lk 2:41-42*). We too, having lived with

them in their house, went with them to the Holy City to celebrate the great Jewish feast in the Temple. Jesus, Mary and Joseph travelled in one of the many caravans, mixing with other villagers. It was a tiring but serene journey, with so many memories of the one they had made years before, when the Son of God was hidden in Our Lady's most pure womb. And now too they passed unnoticed.

Saint Luke tells us that *when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it (Lk 2:43)*. For the first few hours they were not too worried about his absence. *Supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances (Lk 2:44)*. When all their searching proved fruitless, they became anxious. "Where is Jesus? The Child, my

Lady!... where is He? Mary is crying. In vain you and I have run from group to group, from caravan to caravan: no one has seen him. Joseph, after useless attempts to keep from crying, cries too... And you... And I. Being a common little fellow, I cry my eyes out and wail to heaven and earth... to make up for those times when I lost him through my own fault and did not cry.”^[1] —

JOSEPH AND MARY have lost Jesus through no fault of their own. We, in contrast, sometimes lose Him through sin. “The only fear that a disciple should have is that of losing this divine gift, closeness, friendship with God, giving up living according to the Gospel, thereby acquiring moral death, which is the effect of sin.”^[2] — Therefore we need to foster our contrition, which can bring us even closer to Jesus than before. The desire will arise in our heart to do everything to never be separated

from Him again. At other times, however, it is not a question of sin, but our Lord seems to be hiding Himself. Then the days go by without the consolations we felt at other times. Perhaps even what was once pleasant and easy has become, we don't quite know how, much less exciting and attractive.

A second day dawns... a third one... Mary and Joseph are still looking for Jesus. Their anxiousness grows more intense. No one has seen Him: not his friends, nor the strangers who are still in the city, nor the children playing in the streets. They redouble their search. As they enter the Temple, it brings back memories of the unforgettable days they had just spent there with the Child. And many other happy memories of time spent with the Child come flooding back.

The memory of all that our Lord has done in our lives spurs us to continue

seeking Him, even when we are weary, dry or discouraged: “Isn’t it still fresh in your memory what life – your old life – used to be like, with no aim to it, no purpose, no sparkle, and then, with God’s light and your own dedication, a new direction was given to it and you were filled with joy?”^[3] — Our Lord has given a new aim to our life, making it much happier. We are sure of this; it is engraved in our hearts. If He has now hidden Himself, let us seek Him without hesitation: perhaps this is his way of making our trust and love grow stronger. Along the way, He may want to show us new aspects of our Christian vocation. It is a time to remember our dialogue with God and what we have experienced with Him.

AT LAST, AFTER THREE DAYS, Mary and Joseph find the Child in the Temple, seated among the doctors. What joy to discover his

unmistakable figure among the rabbis and disciples, *listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him*, recounts Saint Luke, who probably heard this story from the mother of Jesus herself, *were amazed at his understanding and his answers (Lk 2:46-47)*. Behind Mary and Joseph, we too run to embrace their Son with uncontainable joy. Then we listen in amazement to the dialogue: *“Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them (Lk 2:48-50)*.

Mary and Joseph are puzzled. In the response of the adolescent Jesus there is something beyond their human capacity to understand. Something that has to do with the

mystery of his being and his mission. Perhaps it is a new proclamation. Our Lady could not fully understand it, but *his mother treasured all these things in her heart (Lk 2:51)*. “Jesus’ saying is on too lofty a plane for this moment in time. Even Mary’s faith is a ‘journeying’ faith, a faith that is repeatedly shrouded in darkness, and has to mature by persevering through the darkness. Mary does not understand Jesus’ saying, but she keeps it in her heart and allows it gradually to come to maturity there ... Mary in this passage is presented quite consciously by Luke as the model believer: ‘Blessed is she who has believed,’ as Elizabeth had said to her.”^[4] —

Our Mother teaches us to be totally open to the divine will, even if it is mysterious. That is why Mary is a teacher of faith. We can ask her to help us live with trust in the love of God, who is guiding our lives.

[1] Saint Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, 5th Joyful Mystery.

[2] Pope Francis, Angelus, 21 June 2020.

[3] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, 286.

[4] Pope Benedict XVI, *The Infancy Narratives*, pg. 125.

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