

Jesus with Doctors of the Law: Magisterium, Saints, Poets

The scene of the finding of Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem, in texts from the Magisterium, saints and poets.

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VOICE OF THE MAGISTERIUM

Through this episode, Jesus prepares his Mother for the mystery of the Redemption. During those three

dramatic days when the Son withdraws from them to stay in the temple, Mary and Joseph experience an anticipation of the triduum of his Passion, Death and Resurrection. Letting his Mother and Joseph depart for Galilee without telling them of his intention to stay behind in Jerusalem, Jesus brings them into the mystery of that suffering which leads to joy, anticipating what he would later accomplish with his disciples through the announcement of his Passover.

According to Luke's account, on the return journey to Nazareth Mary and Joseph, after a day's traveling, are worried and anguished over the fate of the Child Jesus. They look for him in vain among their relatives and acquaintances. Returning to Jerusalem and finding him in the temple, they are astonished to see him "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them

questions" (Lk 2:46). His behaviour seems most unusual. Certainly for his parents, finding him on the third day means discovering another aspect of his person and his mission.

He takes the role of teacher, as he will later do in his public life, speaking words that arouse admiration: "And all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers" (2:47). Revealing a wisdom that amazes his listeners, he begins to practice the art of dialogue that will be a characteristic of his saving mission.

His Mother asked Jesus: "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously" (Lk 2:48). Here we can discern an echo of the "whys" asked by so many mothers about the suffering their children cause them, as well as the questions welling up in

the heart of every man and woman in times of trial.

Jesus' reply, in the form of a question, is highly significant: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49).

With this response, he discloses the mystery of his person to Mary and Joseph in an unexpected, unforeseen way, inviting them to go beyond appearances and unfolding before them new horizons for his future.

In his reply to his anguished Mother the Son immediately reveals the reason for his behaviour. Mary had said: "Your father", indicating Joseph; Jesus replies: "My Father", meaning the heavenly Father.

Referring to his divine origin, he does not so much want to state that the temple, his Father's house, is the natural "place" for his presence, as

that he must be concerned about all that regards his Father and his plan. He means to stress that his Father's will is the only norm requiring his obedience.

This reference to his total dedication to God's plan is highlighted in the Gospel text by the words: "I must be", which will later appear in his prediction of the Passion (cf. Mk 8:31).

His parents then are asked to let him go and carry out his mission wherever the heavenly Father will lead him.

The Evangelist comments: "And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them" (Lk 2:50).

Mary and Joseph do not perceive the sense of his answer, nor the way (apparently a rejection) he reacts to their parental concern. With this attitude, Jesus intends to reveal the

mysterious aspects of his intimacy with the Father, aspects which Mary intuits without knowing how to associate them with the trial she is undergoing.

Luke's words teach us how Mary lives this truly unusual episode in the depths of her being. She "kept all these things in her heart" (Lk 2:51). The Mother of Jesus associates these events with the mystery of her Son, revealed to her at the Annunciation, and ponders them in the silence of contemplation, offering her co-operation in the spirit of a renewed "fiat".

In this way the first link is forged in a chain of events that will gradually lead Mary beyond the natural role deriving from her motherhood, to put herself at the service of her divine Son's mission.

from John Paul II, Address, January 15, 1997

VOICE OF THE SAINTS

Consider when this was. When the Lord Jesus, as to His Human Nature, was twelve years old (for as to His Divine Nature He is before all times, and without time), He tarried behind them in the temple, and disputed with the elders, and they wondered at His doctrine; and His parents who were returning from Jerusalem sought Him among their company, among those, that is, who were journeying with them, and when they found Him not, they returned in trouble to Jerusalem, and found Him disputing in the temple with the elders, when He was, as I said, twelve years old.

But what wonder? The Word of God is never silent, though it is not always heard. He is found then in the temple, and His mother saith to Him, “Why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Thy father and I have sought Thee

sorrowing;" and He said, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's service?" This He said for that the Son of God was in the temple of God, for that temple was not Joseph's, but God's. See, says some one, "He did not allow that He was the Son of Joseph."

Wait, brethren, with a little patience, because of the press of time, that it may be long enough for what I have to say. When Mary had said, "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing," He answered, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's service?" for He would not be their Son in such a sense, as not to be understood to be also the Son of God. For the Son of God He was--ever the Son of God--Creator even of themselves who spake to Him; but the Son of Man in time; born of a Virgin without the operation of her husband, yet the Son of both parents. Whence prove we this? Already have

we proved it by the words of Mary, "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." ...

The answer then of the Lord Jesus Christ, "I must be about My Father's service," does not in such sense declare God to be His Father, as to deny that Joseph was His father also. And whence prove we this? By the Scripture, which saith on this wise, "And He said unto them, Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's service; but they understood not what He spake to them: and when He went down with them, He came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." It did not say, "He was subject to His mother," or was "subject to her," but "He was subject to them." To whom was He subject? was it not to His parents? It was to both His parents that He was subject, by the same condescension by which He was the Son of Man The world was subject

unto Christ, and Christ was subject to His parents.

from St. Augustine, "Sermons on the New Testament"

There's a passage in St Luke's gospel, chapter two, which I think will help us to finish off well what we have been reflecting on today. In this passage Christ is a child. How his Mother and St Joseph must have suffered when, on their way back from Jerusalem, they could not find him among their relatives and friends. And then what joy when they recognise him from afar, as he instructs the teachers of Israel. But notice the words that issue from his lips. Don't they seem hard? The Son says in reply to his Mother, 'How is it that you sought me?'

Surely they were right to have looked for him? Souls who know what it is to lose Jesus Christ and to find him again, are able to understand this...

'How is it that you sought me? Didn't you know that I must be about my Father's business?' Didn't you know that I must devote my time entirely to my heavenly Father?

The fruit of our prayer today should be the conviction that our journey on earth, at all times and whatever the circumstances, is for God; that it is a treasure of glory, a foretaste of heaven, something marvellous, which has been entrusted to us to administer, with a sense of responsibility, being answerable both to men and to God. But it is not necessary for us to change our situation in life. Right in the middle of the world we can sanctify our profession or job, our home life, and social relations — in fact all those things that seem to have only a worldly significance

Perhaps the time will come when you and I will be able to say, 'I have

understood more than the elders, because I have fulfilled your commandments.' Youth need not imply thoughtlessness, just as having grey hair does not necessarily mean that a person is prudent and wise.

Come with me to Mary, the Mother of Christ. You, who are our Mother and have seen Jesus grow up and make good use of the time he spent among men, teach me how to spend my days serving the Church and all mankind. My good Mother, teach me, whenever necessary, to hear in the depths of my heart, as a gentle reproach, that my time is not my own, because it belongs to Our Father who is in Heaven.

*from St. Josemaria, "Friends of God,"
nos. 53-54*

VOICE OF THE POETS

CHRIST'S CHILDHOOD.

by Robert Southwell

Till twelve years' age, how Christ His
childhood spent

All earthly pens unworthy were to
write;

Such acts to mortal eyes He did
present,

Whose worth not men but angels
must recite:

No nature's blots, no childish faults
defiled,

Where grace was guide, and God did
play the child.

In springing locks lay crouchèd
hoary wit,

In semblant young, a grave and
ancient port;

In lowly looks high majesty did sit,

In tender tongue sound sense of
sagtest sort:

Nature imparted all that she could
teach,

And God supplied where nature
could not reach.

His mirth of modest mien a mirror
was;

His sadness temper'd with a mild
aspect;

His eye to try each action was a glass,

Whose looks did good approve and
bad correct;

His nature's gifts, His grace, His word
and deed,

Well show'd that all did from a God
proceed.

LA CORONA

by John Donne

I. *Deign at my hands this crown of
prayer and praise,*

Weaved in my lone devout
melancholy,

Thou which of good hast, yea, art
treasury,

All changing unchanged Ancient of
days.

But do not with a vile crown of frail
bays

Reward my Muse's white sincerity;

But what Thy thorny crown gain'd,
that give me,

A crown of glory, which doth flower
always.

The ends crown our works, but Thou
crown'st our ends,

For at our ends begins our endless
rest.

The first last end, now zealously
possess'd,

With a strong sober thirst my soul
attends.

'Tis time that heart and voice be
lifted high ;

Salvation to all that will is nigh.

2. ANNUNCIATION.

Salvation to all that will is nigh ;

That All, which always is all
everywhere,

Which cannot sin, and yet all sins
must bear,

Which cannot die, yet cannot choose
but die,

Lo ! faithful Virgin, yields Himself to
lie

In prison, in thy womb ; and though
He there

Can take no sin, nor thou give, yet
He'll wear,

Taken from thence, flesh, which
death's force may try.

Ere by the spheres time was created
thou

Wast in His mind, who is thy Son,
and Brother;

Whom thou conceivest, conceived ;
yea, thou art now

Thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's
mother,

Thou hast light in dark, and shutt'st
in little room

Immensity, cloister'd in thy dear womb.

3. NATIVITY.

Immensity, cloister'd in thy dear womb,

Now leaves His well-beloved imprisonment.

There he hath made himself to his intent

Weak enough, now into our world to come.

But O ! for thee, for Him, hath th' inn no room?

Yet lay Him in this stall, and from th' orient,

Stars, and wise men will travel to prevent

The effects of Herod's jealous general doom.

See'st thou, my soul, with thy faith's
eye, how He

Which fills all place, yet none holds
Him, doth lie?

Was not His pity towards thee
wondrous high,

That would have need to be pitied by
thee?

Kiss Him, and with Him into Egypt
go,

*With His kind mother, who partakes
thy woe*

4. TEMPLE.

*With His kind mother, who partakes
thy woe,*

Joseph, turn back ; see where your
child doth sit,

Blowing, yea blowing out those
sparks of wit,

Which Himself on the doctors did
bestow.

The Word but lately could not speak,
and lo !

It suddenly speaks wonders ; whence
comes it,

That all which was, and all which
should be writ,

A shallow seeming child should
deeply know?

His Godhead was not soul to His
manhood,

Nor had time mellow'd Him to this
ripeness;

But as for one which hath a long task,
'tis good,

With the sun to begin His business,

He in His age's morning thus began,

By miracles exceeding power of man.

5. CRUCIFYING.

By miracles exceeding power of man,

He faith in some, envy in some begat,

For, what weak spirits admire,
ambitious hate:

In both affections many to Him ran.

But O ! the worst are most, they will
and can,

Alas ! and do, unto th' Immaculate,

Whose creature Fate is, now
prescribe a fate,

Measuring self-life's infinity to span,

Nay to an inch. Lo ! where
condemned He

Bears His own cross, with pain, yet
by and by

When it bears him, He must bear
more and die.

Now Thou art lifted up, draw me to
Thee,

And at Thy death giving such liberal
dole,

*Moist with one drop of Thy blood my
dry soul.*

6. RESURRECTION.

*Moist with one drop of Thy blood, my
dry soul*

Shall—though she now be in extreme
degree

Too stony hard, and yet too fleshly—
be

Freed by that drop, from being
starved, hard or foul,

And life by this death abled shall
control

Death, whom Thy death slew ; nor
shall to me

Fear of first or last death bring
misery,

If in thy life-book my name thou
enroll.

Flesh in that long sleep is not
putrified,

But made that there, of which, and
for which it was;

Nor can by other means be glorified.

May then sin's sleep and death soon
from me pass,

That waked from both, I again risen
may

Salute the last and everlasting day.

7. ASCENSION.

Salute the last and everlasting day,

Joy at th' uprising of this Sun, and
Son,

Ye whose true tears, or tribulation

Have purely wash'd, or burnt your
drossy clay.

Behold, the Highest, parting hence
away,

Lightens the dark clouds, which He
treads upon;

Nor doth He by ascending show
alone,

But first He, and He first enters the
way.

O strong Ram, which hast batter'd
heaven for me!

Mild Lamb, which with Thy Blood
hast mark'd the path!

Bright Torch, which shinest, that I
the way may see !

O, with Thy own Blood quench Thy
own just wrath ;

And if Thy Holy Spirit my Muse did
raise,

*Deign at my hands this crown of
prayer and praise.*

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