

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The shepherds went in haste,
and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant
lying in a manger.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who were pleased to give us
the shining example of the Holy Family,
graciously grant that we may imitate them
in practising the virtues of family life and in
the bonds of charity,
and so, in the joy of your house,
delight one day in eternal rewards.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28

A reading from the first book of Samuel.

Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son,
and called him Samuel "since" she said "I
asked the Lord for him."

When a year had gone by, the husband
Elkanah went up again with all his family to
offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to
fulfil his vow. Hannah, however, did not go
up, having said to her husband, "Not before
the child is weaned. Then I will bring him and
present him before the Lord and he shall stay
there for ever."

When she had weaned him, she took him
up with her together with a three-year-old
bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and
she brought him to the temple of the Lord at
Shiloh; and the child was with them. They
slaughtered the bull and the child's mother
came to Eli. She said, "If you please, my lord.
As you live, my lord, I am the woman who
stood here beside you, praying to the Lord.
This is the child I prayed for, and the Lord
granted me what I asked him. Now I make
him over to the Lord for the whole of his life.
He is made over to the Lord."

There she left him, for the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 83

Response:

They are happy who dwell in your house,
O Lord.

- How lovely is your dwelling place
Lord, God of hosts.
My soul is longing and yearning,
is yearning for the courts of the Lord.
My heart and my soul ring out their joy
to God, the living God. (R.)
- They are happy, who dwell in your house,
for ever singing your praise.
They are happy, whose strength is in you;
they walk with ever growing strength. (R.)
- O Lord, God of hosts, hear my prayer,
give ear, O God of Jacob.
Turn your eyes, O God, our shield,
look on the face of your anointed. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24

A reading from the first letter of St John.

Think of the love that the Father has lavished
on us,
by letting us be called God's children;
and that is what we are.

Because the world refused to acknowledge
him,
therefore it does not acknowledge us.

My dear people, we are already the children
of God

but what we are to be in the future has not
yet been revealed,
all we know is, that when it is revealed
we shall be like him
because we shall see him as he really is.

My dear people,
if we cannot be condemned by our own
conscience,

we need not be afraid in God's presence,
and whatever we ask him
we shall receive,

because we keep his commandments
and live the kind of life that he wants.

His commandments are these:
that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus
Christ

and that we love one another
as he told us to.

Whoever keeps his commandments
lives in God and God lives in him.

We know that he lives in us
by the Spirit that he has given us.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Open our heart, O Lord,
to accept the words of your Son.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 2:41-52

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Luke.

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go
to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover.
When he was twelve years old, they went
up for the feast as usual. When they were
on their way home after the feast, the boy
Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without
his parents knowing it. They assumed he
was with the caravan, and it was only after a

day's journey that they went to look for him
among their relations and acquaintances.
When they failed to find him they went back
to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.

Three days later, they found him in the
Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening
to them and asking them questions; and all
those who heard him were astounded at
his intelligence and his replies. They were
overcome when they saw him, and his
mother said to him, "My child, why have you
done this to us? See how worried your father
and I have been, looking for you." "Why were
you looking for me?" he replied. "Did you not
know that I must be busy with my Father's
affairs?" But they did not understand what he
meant.

He then went down with them and came to
Nazareth and lived under their authority. His
mother stored up all these things in her heart.
And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature,
and in favour with God and men.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We offer you, Lord, the sacrifice of
conciliation,
humbly asking that,
through the intercession of the Virgin Mother
of God and Saint Joseph,
you may establish our families firmly in your
grace and your peace.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Our God has appeared on the earth, and
lived among us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Bring those you refresh with this heavenly
Sacrament,
most merciful Father,
to imitate constantly the example of the Holy
Family,
so that, after the trials of this world,
we may share their company for ever.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE WORD

The colourful and poignant episode which we find in our Gospel reading today is only recounted in the Gospel of Luke. The evangelist uses it as a bridge between the account of the birth of Jesus and the beginning of his adult ministry.

He emphasises the religious observance of the couple described as "the parents of Jesus", who were accustomed to making an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the feast of Passover. On this occasion, the twelve-year-old Jesus decides to remain behind without informing them. They discover him in the Temple, teaching the teachers.

In spite of all the information that they have received, which we have considered over the Christmas period, about the nature of the child to be born, Mary and Joseph fail to understand Jesus' rather enigmatic reply to his mother's relieved but exasperated question, "Why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you." He answers, rather abruptly, about being "busy with my Father's affairs". This failure to understand what Jesus says will recur in the Gospel narrative.

This incident is bracketed in Luke's Gospel by notices about Jesus growing up in Nazareth: the verse immediately preceding today's extract says that "he grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom and God's favour was with him". This wisdom is illustrated in his discussions with the teachers of the Law in the Temple. After that Jesus "went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority". Jesus' human nature is very much emphasised in these passages. ■

REFLECT

Today, a child of twelve is embarking on secondary school. At the time of Jesus, a boy of twelve was probably considered able to undertake adult responsibility in religious matters and to be responsible for any vow he might make. So this story is not simply about a lost child. Only a parent can fully understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph on discovering that Jesus was missing from the company with whom they were travelling.

This story is highly charged from an emotional point of view. There is a missing child: a frantic search by anxious parents; the eventual relief at discovering that the boy is safe and sound; the perplexity at his precocious talent in holding an apparently impressive discussion with well-qualified experts in their own field. Then there is the first indication that the adolescent has a mind of his own, that he senses a calling of which his parents have no inkling or understanding, but the family relationship continues until the appropriate time.

To be a married person, a parent, is just as much a vocation as to be a priest or religious sister or brother, and just as demanding – or more so. This feast reminds us that most Christians are called to be committed partners in marriage and parenthood, and should be honoured as such. Like Mary, maybe we should "store up all these things in our hearts". ■

Nativity scene from front façade of the
Cathedral of St Wenceslas in Olomouc,
Czech Republic

SAY

Blessed are those who fear
the Lord and walk in his
ways.
(Psalm 127:1)

LEARN

The average life expectancy at the time of
Jesus was around 35 years.

A boy (*sic*) of twelve was considered able to
undertake adult religious responsibilities.

The depiction of Joseph as an elderly man
has no basis in the Gospel tradition.

DO

Put out your crib figures of Mary, Joseph
and the child Jesus. Reflect that most
Christians are called to live out our faith as
married and family members.

