

8. June 2024

Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary  
His mother kept all this in her heart

Lk 2:41-51

*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 the days of the feast were over and they set off home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was somewhere in the party, 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. It happened that, three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, 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.' He replied, '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 meant. He went down with them then and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority. His mother stored up all these things in her heart.*

Jesus stayed in Jerusalem because He wanted to be in His Father's house. Initially, this response of His was incomprehensible to His parents, for they had been looking for Him for three anguished days when they could not find Him in the pilgrimage caravan.

At that moment, Jesus' parents found themselves confronted with that mystery that even today certain parents experience when their children feel a call to religious life; a life that belongs totally to God and whose first commitment is to Him. As we see in today's Gospel, even Mary had to understand even more deeply the mystery of her Son, who was no ordinary man, but who is both true God and true man.

The Mother of Jesus did precisely the right thing in the face of that mystery. She kept in her heart all that had happened. There, in her heart, she meditated on all these things and thus certainly understood them better and better (cf. Lk 2:19). Let us also remember

another passage of Scripture, when Jesus was preaching and so many people came to listen to Him that He and the disciples had no time to eat. His relatives wanted to take Him away because they thought He had lost His mind (Mk 3:21). They could not understand the mission of the Lord at that moment. On another occasion, when Jesus was told that His mother and brothers were waiting for Him outside, He referred to the universality of spiritual kinship and did not allow Himself to be disturbed (cf. Lk 8:20-21).

Mary's way of dealing with this situation, when she meets her Son in the Temple, should be for us a guideline for how to act when we notice that God has laid His hand on a person close to us and has called her to follow Him on a special path. If we imitate Mary, we will be careful not to interfere unwisely, so as not to complicate the person's situation even more with our lack of understanding. The best reaction, then, is to keep silent and to bring everything before God, letting Him, in His Wisdom, act.

Perhaps it is often difficult for us to hear the subtle call of God to our heart. It does not always have to be a religious vocation, but can be a call to enter into a deeper intimacy with God. Perhaps He also wants us to spend more time in our Father's house, whether in church or in the temple of our heart.

If we respond to the call that resonates within us, we cannot help but be misunderstood by some people. The mystery of the love between God and the soul can only be understood by those who also live it. Let us think of a couple in love: at first they only have eyes to see each other, and no one should disturb this first love.

The same is true of the deepest encounter with God. It is a love that no one should disturb, but one has to step back from this mystery. *"Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"* Jesus asked His parents. Perhaps he could also have said: "You know that I love you. You can always find me there where my greatest love is, which is my Father."

There, in the love of the Father, one meets all those who have discovered the deepest dimension of their lives and responded to His call. There we can adore our Heavenly Father together with them. In Mary's heart divine love is fully inflamed. If she offers us her heart, she does so in order to help us to kindle God's love in our hearts as well.