

The Feast of Saint Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Luke 2:41-51

REFLECTION

On the 8th December, Pope Francis proclaimed a “Year of Saint Joseph” from 8th December 2020, to 8 December 2021. Today’s celebration focusses on St Joseph as husband of the Blessed virgin Mary. We are being drawn to look at Joseph as a parent with Mary. Parents are people who guide and guard our growing up.

Today’s gospel is a story about growing up and it is clear from the story that growing up is hard work for parents. Like any parent, Joseph was worried about his young son as he grew up. We find Joseph and Mary disturbed when they discovered their son was lost. But there is a twist of events when they finally find him: Jesus isn’t the one who is lost. He knows who he is and where he belongs and where he should be. On the contrary, it is Mary and Joseph who are the ones who are lost. Jesus is the one who takes the role to grow up Mary and Joseph. That is exactly what Jesus’ question to Mary does. When they finally found him, the young Jesus said to them, “*Why were you searching for me?*” he asks. In other words, “*Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?*”

Jesus is telling Mary and Joseph that they should have known where he was. ‘*Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father’s affairs?*’

Just imagine, when Jesus said, ‘*my Father*’, he was referring to God and not to Joseph. Joseph must have developed goose flesh hearing those words from the lips of the 12 year old Jesus. This left Joseph and Mary confused, as it clearly come out in today’s gospel reading, ‘*they did not understand what he meant*’. Roles are definitely changing here: it is now Joseph and Mary who are lost. Which means that Joseph had to learn to let go of his son Jesus to God. He had to learn to let go of Jesus to his heavenly Father’s plan for his life.

For you and me, it means that growing up is not about how old we are. In the Gospel it is about Mary and Joseph: they needed to grow up. Everyday however, it is about you and me growing up. Growing up is about moving into deeper and more authentic relationships with God, our world, each other, and ourselves. Jesus is the one who grows us up in all these.

Just as children have a way of doing that enables parents to grow up as they challenge them to look at their world, their lives, and themselves in new, different, and sometimes painful ways, so is Jesus today putting the Father at the centre of his world and asks Mary and us to do the same, to move to the Father’s home.