

## Saint\_Thomas\_explains\_the\_Gospel\_for\_the\_Holy\_Family

*And when he was twelve years old, they going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not. And thinking that he was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers. And seeing him, they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? did you not know, that I must be about my father's business? And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And his mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men. (St. Luke 2: 42-52)*

CYRIL; The Evangelist having said before that the Child grew and waxed strong, verifies his own words when he relates, that Jesus with the holy Virgin went up to Jerusalem; as it is said, And when he was twelve years old, &c.

GREEK EX. His indication of wisdom did not exceed the measure of His age, but at the time that with us the powers of discernment are generally perfected, the wisdom of Christ shows itself.

AMBROSE; Or the twelfth year was the commencement of our Lord's disputation with the doctors, for this was the number of the Evangelists necessary to preach the faith.

THEOPHYL; We may also say, that as by the seventh number, so also by the twelfth, (which consists of the parts of seven multiplied alternately by one another,) the universality and perfection of either things or times is signified, and therefore rightly from the number twelve, the glory of Christ takes its beginning, being that by which all places and times are to be filled.

THEOPHYL; Now that the Lord came up every year to Jerusalem at the Passover, betokens His humility as a man, for it is, man's duty to meet together to offer sacrifices to God, and conciliate Him with prayers. Accordingly the Lord as man, did among men what God by angels commended men to do. Hence it is said, According to the custom of the feast day. Let us follow then the journey of His mortal life, if we delight to behold the glory of His divine nature.

GREEK EX. The feast having been celebrated, while the rest returned, Jesus secretly tarried behind. As it follows, And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew not of it. It is said, When the days were accomplished, because the feast lasted seven days. But the reason of His tarrying behind in secret was, that His parents might not be a hindrance to His carrying on

the discussion with the lawyers; or perhaps to avoid appearing to despise his parents by not obeying their commands. He remains therefore secretly, that he might neither be kept away nor be disobedient.

ORIGEN; But we must not wonder that they are called His parents, seeing the one from her childbirth, the other from his knowledge of it, deserved the names of father and mother.

THEOPHYL; But some one will ask, how was it that the Son of God, brought up by His parents with such care, could be left behind from forgetfulness? To which it is answered, that the custom of the children of Israel while assembling at Jerusalem on the feast days, or returning to their homes, was for the women and men to go separately, and the infants or children to go with either parent indiscriminately. And so both Mary and Joseph each thought in turn that the Child Jesus, whom they saw not with them, was returning with the other parent. Hence it follows, But they, supposing him to have been in the company, &c.

ORIGEN; But as when the Jews plotted against Him He escaped from the midst of them, and was not seen; so now it seems that the Child Jesus remained, and His parents knew not where He was. As it follows, And not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking for him.

GLOSS. They were on their way home, one day's journey from Jerusalem; on the second day they seek for Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and when they found Him not, they returned on the third day to Jerusalem, and there they found Him. As it follows, And it came to pass, after three days they found him.

ORIGEN; He is not found as soon as sought for, for Jesus was not among His kinsfolk and relations, among those who are joined to Him in the flesh, nor in the company of the multitude can He be found. Learn where those who seek Him find Him, not every where, but in the temple. And do you then seek Jesus in the temple of God. Seek Him in the Church, and seek Him among the masters who are in the temple. For if you wilt so seek Him, you shall find Him. They found Him not among His kinsfolk, for human relations could not comprehend the Son of God; not among His acquaintance, for He passes far beyond all human knowledge and understanding. Where then do they find Him? In the temple! If at any time you seek the Son of God, seek Him first in the temple, thither go up, and verily shall you find Christ, the Word, and the Wisdom, (i.e. the Son of God.)

AMBROSE; After three days He is found in the temple, that it might be for a sign, that after three days of victorious suffering, He who was believed to be dead should rise again anti manifest Himself to our faith, seated in heaven with divine glory.

GLOSS. Or because the advent of Christ, which was looked for by the Patriarchs before the Law, was not found, nor again, that which was sought for by prophets and just men under the Law, but that alone is found which is sought for by Gentiles under grace.

ORIGEN; Because moreover He was the Son of God, He is found in the midst of the doctors, enlightening and instructing them. But because He was a little child, He is found among them not teaching but asking questions, as it is said, Sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And this He did as a duty of reverence,

that He might set us an example of the proper behavior of children, though they be wise and learned, rather to hear their masters than teach them, and not to vaunt themselves with empty boasting. But He asked not that He might learn, but that asking He might instruct.

For from the same source of learning is derived both the power of asking and answering wisely, as it follows, All who heard him were astonished at his wisdom.

THEOPHYL; To show that He was a man, He humbly listened to the masters; but to prove that He was God, He divinely answered those who spoke.

GREEK EX. He asks questions with reason, He listens with wisdom, and answers with more wisdom, so as to cause astonishment. As it follows, And they who saw it were astonished.

CHRYS. The Lord truly did no miracle in His childhood, yet this one fact St. Luke mentions, which made men look with wonder upon Him.

THEOPHYL; For from His tongue there went forth divine wisdom, while His age exhibited man's helplessness, and hence the Jews, amid the high things they hear and the lowly things they see, are perplexed with doubts and astonishment. But we can in no wise wonder, knowing the words of the Prophet, that thus unto us a Child is born, that He abides the mighty God.

GREEK EX. But the ever-wonderful mother of God, moved by a mother's feelings, as it were with weeping makes her mournful inquiry, in every thing like a mother, with confidence, humility, and affection. As it follows, And his mother said to him, Son, what have you done?

ORIGEN; The holy Virgin knew that He was not the Son of Joseph, and yet calls her husband His father according to the belief of the Jews, who thought that He was conceived in the common way. Now to speak generally we may say, that the Holy Spirit honored Joseph by the name of father, because he brought up the Child Jesus; but more technically, that it might not seem superfluous in St. Luke, bringing down the genealogy from David to Joseph. But why sought they Him sorrowing? Was it that he might have perished or been lost? It could not be. For what should cause them to dread the loss of Him whom they knew to be the Lord? But as whenever you read the Scriptures you search out their meaning with pains, not that you suppose them to have erred or to contain any thing incorrect, but that the truth which they have inherent in them you are anxious to find out; so they sought Jesus, lest perchance leaving them he should have returned to heaven, thither to descend when He would. He then who seeks Jesus must go about it not carelessly and idly, as many seek Him who never find Him, but with labor and sorrow.

GLOSS. Or they feared lest Herod who sought Him in His infancy, now that He was advanced to boyhood might find an opportunity of putting Him to death.

GREEK EX. But the Lord Himself sets every thing at rest, and correcting as it were her saying concerning him who was His reputed father, manifests His true Father, teaching us not to walk on the ground, but to raise ourselves on high, as it follows, And he says to them, What is it that you ask of me?

THEOPHYL; He blames them not that they seek Him as their son, but compels them to raise the eyes of their mind to what was rather due to Him whose eternal Son He was. Hence it follows, Knew you not? &c.

AMBROSE; There are two generations in Christ, one from His Father, the other from His mother; the Father's more divine, the mother's that which has come down for our use and advantage.

CYRIL; He says this then by way of showing that He surpasses all human standards, and hinting that the Holy Virgin was made the handmaid of the work in bringing His flesh unto the world, but that He Himself was by nature and in truth God, and the Son of the Father most high Now from this let the followers of Valentinus, hearing that the temple was of God, be ashamed to say that the Creator, and the God of the law and of the temple, is not also the Father of Christ.

EPIPH. Let Ebion know that at twelve years old, not thirty, Christ is found the astonishment of all men, wonderful and mighty in the words of grace. We can not here fore say, that after that the Spirit came to Him in Baptism He was made the Christ, that is, anointed with divinity, but from His very childhood He acknowledged both the temple and His Father.

GREEK EX. This is the first demonstration of the and power of the Child Jesus. For as to what are called you acts of His childhood, we can not but suppose them to be the work not only of a childish but even of a devilish mind and perverse will, attempting to revile those things which are contained in the Gospel and the sacred prophecies. But should one desire to receive only such things as are generally believed, and are not contrary to our other declarations, but accord also with the words of prophecy, let it suffice that Jesus was distinguished in form above the sons of men; obedient to His mother, gentle in disposition; in appearance full of grace and dignity; eloquent in words, kind and thoughtful of the wants of others, known among all for a power and energy, as of one who was filled with all wisdom; and as in other things, so also in all human conversation, though above man, Himself the rule and measure. But that which most distinguished Him was His meekness, and that a razor had never come upon His head, nor any human hand except His mother's. But from these words we may derive a lesson; for when the Lord reproves Mary seeking Him among His relations, He most aptly points to the giving up of all fleshly ties, showing that it is not for him to attain the goal of perfection who is still encompassed by and walks among the things of the body, and that men fall from perfection through love of their relations.

THEOPHYL; It follows, And they understood him not, that is, the word which He spoke to them of His divinity.

ORIG. Or they knew not whether when He said about my Father's business, He referred to the temple, or something higher and more edifying; for every one of us who does good, is the seat of God the Father; but whoever is the seat of God the Father, has Christ in the midst of him.

GREEK EX. All that time of the life of Christ which He passed between His manifestation in the temple and His baptism being devoid of any great public miracles or teaching, the Evangelist sums up in one word saying, And he went down with them.

ORIGEN; Jesus frequently went down with His disciples, for He is not always dwelling on the mount, for they who were troubled with various diseases were not able to ascend the mount. For this reason now also He went down to them who were below. It follows: And he was subject to them.

GREEK EX. Sometimes by His word He first institutes laws, and He afterwards confirms them, by His work, as when He says, The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. For shortly after seeking our salvation He poured out His own life. But sometimes He first sets forth in Himself an example, and afterwards, as far as words can go, draws therefrom rules of life, as He does here, showing forth by His work these three things above the rest, the love of God, honor to parents, but the preferring God also to our parents. For when He was blamed by His parents, He counts all other things of less moment than those which belong to God; again, He gives His obedience also to His parents.

THEOPHYL; For what is the teacher of virtue, unless he fulfill his duty to his parents? What else did He do among us, than what He wished should be done by us?

ORIGEN; Let us then also ourselves be subject to our parents. But if our fathers are not let us be subject to those who are our fathers. Jesus the Son of God is subject to Joseph and Mary. But I must be subject to the Bishop who has been constituted my father. It seems that Joseph knew that Jesus was greater than he, and therefore in awe moderated his authority. But let every one see, that oftentimes he who is subject is the greater. Which if they who are higher in dignity understand they will not be elated with pride, knowing that their superior is subject to them.

GREG. NYSS. Further, since the young have not yet perfect understanding, and have need to be led forward by those who have advanced to a more perfect state; therefore when He arrived at twelve years, He is obedient to His parents, to show that whatever is made perfect by moving forward, before that it arrives at the end profitably embraces obedience, (as leading to good.)

BASIL; But from His very first years being obedient to His parents, He endured all bodily labors, humbly and reverently. For since His parents were honest and just, yet at the same time poor, and ill supplied with the necessaries of life, (as the stable which administered to the holy birth bears witness,) it is plain that they continually underwent bodily fatigue in providing for their daily wants. But Jesus being obedient to them, as the Scriptures testify, even in sustaining labors, submitted Himself to a complete subjection.

AMBROSE; And can you wonder if He who is subject to His mother, also submits to His Father? Surely that subjection is a mark not of weakness but of filial duty. Let then the heretic so raise his head as to assert that He who is sent has need of other help; yet why should He need human help, in obeying His mother's authority? He was obedient to a

handmaid, He was obedient to His pretended father, and do you wonder whether He obeyed God; Or is it a mark of duty to obey man, of weakness to obey God.

THEOPHYL; The Virgin, whether she understood or whether she could not yet understand, equally laid up all things in her heart for reflection and diligent examination. Hence it follows, And, his mother laid up all these things, etc. Mark the wisest of mothers, Mary the mother of true wisdom, becomes the scholar or disciple of the Child. For she yielded to Him not as to a boy, nor as to a man, but as unto God. Further, she pondered upon both His divine words and works, so that nothing that was said or done by Him was lost upon her, but as the Word itself was before in her womb, so now she conceived the ways and words of the same, and in a manner nursed them in her heart. And while indeed she thought upon one thing at the time, another she wanted to be more clearly revealed to her; and this was her constant rule and law through her whole life.

It follows, And Jesus increased in wisdom.

THEOPHYL. Not that He became wise by making progress, but that by degrees He revealed His wisdom. As it was when He disputed with the Scribes, asking them questions of their law to the astonishment of all who heard Him. You see then how He increased in wisdom, in that He became known to many, and caused them to wonder, for the showing forth of His wisdom is His increase. But mark how the Evangelist, having interpreted what it is to increase in wisdom, adds, and in stature, declaring thereby that an increase or growth in age is an increase in wisdom.

CYRIL; But the Eunomian Heretics say, "How can He be equal to the Father in substance, who is said to increase, as if before imperfect." But not because He is the Word, but because He is made man, He is said to receive increase. For if He really increased after that He was made flesh, as having before existed imperfect, why then do we give Him thanks as having thence become incarnate for us? But how if He is the true wisdom can He be increased, or how can He who gives grace to others be Himself advanced in grace. Again, if bearing that the Word humbled Himself, no one is offended (thinking slightly of the true God,) but rather marvels at His compassion, how is it not absurd to be offended at hearing that He increases? For as He was humbled for us, so for us He increased, that we who have fallen through sin might increase in Him. For whatever concerns us, Christ Himself has truly undertaken for us, that He might restore us to a better state. And mark what He says, not that the Word, but Jesus, increases, that you should not suppose that the pure Word increases, but the Word made flesh; and as we confess that the Word suffered in the flesh, although the flesh only suffered, because of the Word the flesh was which suffered, so He is said to increase, because the human nature of the Word increased in Him. But He is said to increase in His human nature, not as if that nature which was perfect from the beginning received increase, but that by degrees it was manifested. For the law of nature brooks not that man should have higher faculties than the age of his body permits. The Word then (made man) was perfect, as being the power and wisdom of the Father, but because something was to be yielded to the habits of our nature, lest He should be counted strange by those who saw Him, He manifested Himself as man with a body,

gradually advancing in growth, and was daily thought wiser by those who saw and heard Him.

GREEK EX. He increased then in age, His body growing to the stature of man; but in wisdom through those who were taught divine truths by Him; in grace, that is, whereby we are advanced with joy, trusting at last to obtain the promises; and this indeed before God, because having put on the flesh, He performed His Father's work, but before men by their conversion from the worship of idols to the knowledge of the Most High Trinity.

THEOPHYL. He says before God and men, because we must first please God, then man.

GREG. NYSS. The word also increases in different degrees in those who receive it; and according to the measure of its increase a man appears either an infant, grown up, or a perfect man.

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