

# Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

## Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> Dec 2021 – Feast of the Holy Family

1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself might pray the text over the next few days.
4. Over the next week, set aside times to come back more than once to the passage. You could read it all or part of it again, slowly. Perhaps there is a special word for you in this passage of Scripture? Keep this word or phrase in your thoughts and gently repeat it, bringing it to mind and allowing God to speak to you in your heart.
5. Finally, come back to the text to conclude: What is God in this scripture asking of you this week? What is the one challenge, one little change you are asked to make or the thing you have been asked to do? Then say a prayer of thanksgiving for the good news in the passage. End in quiet prayer.



### HIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – Luke 2:41-52

#### *Why were you searching for me?...*

*Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.*



### A Short Thought

Like Mary and Joseph, we cannot or do not want to see that our Jesus is growing up even as we grow up. Our Jesus is growing beyond our childhood, beyond our children's childhood. Our Jesus is growing beyond our expectations. Arriving in the temple, Mary saw only her boy. She couldn't or wouldn't see that Jesus had grown. Eager to be a good mother, always pondering the events that led up to and followed Jesus' birth, Mary wasn't ready to "lend" her Jesus to God. Perhaps she just wanted to keep her firstborn close to her. Maybe she simply wanted to delay the symbolic sword that Simeon announced would pierce her own heart as it took the life of her son.

Looking upon Jesus and seeing her baby, Mary asks, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." And Jesus answers, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" These same questions face us this week after Christmas, as peace and goodwill fade and Christmas leaves so many of us wanting. With Mary, we ask, "Why have you treated us like this?" We ask ourselves; we ask our families. We ask the church and we ask God, when our expectations are shattered.

And Jesus answers, "Why were you searching for me?" We know where Jesus has gone. He's about his Father's business. But we aren't ready to let go of our expectations and give our Jesus to God. We are not ready to accept that Jesus did not come to fulfil our expectations. He is not to be found in sentiment for the way things used to be or the way we wish things could be. Jesus is about the future. Jesus was born and lived and died and rose to be about God's business of putting an end to our searching by making plain the way to God, even if that means shattering our expectations.

The good news for us in this week after Christmas is that, like Mary and Joseph, our search has ended. Jesus shows us the way to God. The scary part, perhaps, is that our search doesn't end where we expect. Mary and Joseph searched three days for Jesus, and on the third day found him alive and well. But they didn't find him in the expected places — the safe confines of his extended family or the familiar company of the pilgrims' caravan. After three days, Mary and

Joseph found Jesus alive and well in the Temple at Jerusalem among the teachers of the law. Even here there is an echo of the Easter story.

## SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Luke's skill as a storyteller comes through in the details of the story in a way that many people can identify with: the loss of a child, the frantic search, the seemingly offhand speech of the teenager. Let the drama of the story speak to you. Where do you find good news in it?
2. Isn't it consoling that even Mary did not understand everything fully? We so often do not understand why painful events happen in our lives. Like Mary, we can ask: why? Where is God in this event? And again like Mary, we may not understand the answer. But Jesus goes with us, just as he went home with Mary and Joseph. And if, like Mary, we treasure what has happened in our heart, the day will come when all will be made clear to us
3. Most people, in one way or another, leave their family environment. While our family always has a central place in our concerns, we are also called to serve the wider family. All of us, and especially Christians, are called to follow the example of Jesus and align ourselves with the family of the world. We are all brothers and sisters to each other and are called to care and love each other. Where do we show this care? When have you felt this care?
4. "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" This seemingly insensitive reply by Jesus to Mary serves to highlight that in his life the mission given him by God would take precedence over family ties, painful though this would be. Perhaps you have known situations in your own life, or in the life of another, where there was pain for family members as you followed your own destiny? Where in the midst of the pain was the good news?

## Prayer -

As your sons and daughters, O loving God, we come before you in thanksgiving, called and united by your eternal Word. Teach us to ponder the mystery of Nazareth, that we may always find in you the source of our strength and the unity of our families. I ask this 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**

### Prayer in these uncertain times

*We pray for all those in our country and throughout the world suffering from the Corona Virus. May its victims and their families be strengthened by the support of our community of faith and restored soon to full health. We also pray for our leaders and medical personnel who deal with the virus. May we keep calm and may we join together in solidarity with care and compassion to tackle this emergency. This we ask in confidence through Christ Our Lord. Amen*

