

*Mary, the heart of the Mystical Body*  
*The Seven Sorrows Rosary, Week 3*  
*The loss of Jesus in the Temple*

In this third of Mary's sorrows we jump ahead several years. Saint Luke relates this scene in his Gospel (2:41-51): "Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, 'Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety. And he said to them, '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 said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart."

This Scripture passage teaches us something important about Jesus, and something equally important about his parents. First we can see that at 12 years old, Jesus had an understanding of his uniqueness and his mission.

"Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house?" Developing an identity of one's own apart from one's parents is a normal part of adolescence, and so Jesus was like other young people in this respect. By staying behind in Jerusalem without telling his parents he was beginning to forge his own path in life. At age 12, he already knew who his real Father was, even though he had known Joseph as his earthly father ever since his birth.

Now let's look at Mary's reaction when she finds Jesus in the Temple. St. Luke tells us that Jesus' parents did not understand what he said to them. "Son, why have you done this to us?" Parents and other family members often fail to understand when a young person shares their dream of a vocation in the Church. Ambition, social pressures and even anti-religious prejudice often prevent families from even teaching their children to see life as a vocation given by God. The Gospel account of the adolescent Jesus, subject to his parents but able to detach himself





from them to follow his own vocation, sheds valuable light on how the Gospel influences family relationships.

Mary let her Son know that he had caused them anxiety, but she didn't scold **or discourage** him. We are told that she kept all these things in her heart. I think this means that she tried the best she could to understand her Son as he was. Saint John Paul II, who wrote so much about Mary, taught that there was a certain darkness to Mary's faith; everything wasn't always crystal clear. She must have suffered due to her inability to understand and the emotional distance from her Son this caused. But she kept it all in her heart, remained close to her Son and grew in faith. Her life was a pilgrimage of faith; she didn't always have it all together.

After this scene in the Temple the Holy Family kind of falls off the radar and we don't hear about them again until Jesus has reached adulthood and begins his public ministry. Mary is mentioned several times during Jesus' active ministry, for example at the wedding feast of Cana. She must have experienced ups and downs in her life as the Lord's mother and first disciple, and there must have been many days when she just didn't grasp what was happening.

I often reflect on Jesus' first appearance in the synagogue in Nazareth. Although Mary's presence isn't mentioned, we can assume she was there, since it was their hometown. How must she have felt when her Son told his compatriots that a prophet is never welcome in his own country, and when they tried to throw him over the brow of the hill?

What we do know is that Mary persevered in faith through good times and bad, even when she didn't understand. Father Don Calloway, a Marian Father of the Immaculate Conception and popular author, noted that "Our society, and this generation in particular, has grown up with a poor aptitude for persevering. As soon as things don't go our way," he wrote, "we tend to jump ship and look for other options.... As soon as there is some inconvenience or a burden, there is a tendency to try and 'break free' .... 'If this relationship begins to cause me hardship, I'm out...'"

Mary didn't do this. She can teach us perseverance and faithfulness to our vocation and she will obtain these graces for ourselves and for young people if we ask her for them.