

## The Finding at the Temple

I'm changing. Praying the Mysteries again and again changes me and how I perceive the world and my place in it. Among other things, I've changed how I think about the Finding at the Temple. For my first years with the rosary, I saw the story through Mary's eyes. I thought of how it would feel for a mother to lose a child for three days. I imagined Mary's fear and her anger, her maternal panic. I connected with her experience through a very minor experience of mothering that I had when my children were young. I was supposed to pick my youngest child up from summer school but it was a busy day - we had guests staying and I was caught up in the goings on at home and I simply forgot to drive over to the school to pick her up. I was mortified when the school secretary called, and of course my daughter was crushed. I felt like a failure, my belief that I had failed my daughter tapped into my deepest fears of not being a good enough mother. That minor experience that played out in minutes rather than hours or days allowed me to align with Mary, again and again. It's an adult's worst fear that we will lose our child. In any circumstance. It was different for Mary, of course, and there were other stories and foreshadowings at play - but I still feel a sympathetic flutter when I consider what she would have been feeling for those three days.

Recently, my imagining has given way to another memory, where I was the "lost" one, when my own mother didn't know where I was. Except I wasn't lost - I knew exactly where I was. I knew I was safe and doing what felt right and exciting to me.

But my mother didn't know I was fine. I had gone to visit a distant relative on my way home from school but we didn't have mobile phones in those days and I didn't think to let her know where I was or what had compelled me to stop for visit on that day. When I finally came home, my mother was frantic, and absolutely furious with me - it is the only time she ever grounded me.

I've been thinking about those two experiences - the losing and the finding - and the fact that when I was lost to my mother, I knew exactly where I was. I realise there's a pinpoint of experience that is easy to miss amongst the busyness of daily life. As we mature there comes a point where we take off on our own because we trust our own perceptions and our ability to navigate the world, earlier and more naively than our parents do - they haven't quite caught up with where we think we are, or they simply know



better. I don't know that it's a conscious process but I think there's a tiny crucial pinpoint of time in life where we think it's time for us to go about our business and we're anxious to get going, eager to get on with our lives and we see no reason why we shouldn't. It is a moment of separation that is a deep mystery of maturation. Others may know better. Perhaps we haven't proven ourselves or maybe they haven't received that internal parental message telling them it's time to take another step towards letting go. It's another moment of cutting the cord when a child wants to pursue their destiny before anyone is quite ready. It is a quantum leap in maturity that swells just below the surface and then takes us by surprise when it suddenly plays out. Fresh decisions have to be made, and quickly. My mother grounded me. Mary took Jesus home with her.

Nearly sixty years on, I still remember that day and how I felt. Nothing was ever quite the same again.

*Image: Atelier D'art De Bethléem*