

## Who Is Family?

**Intro.** Human communication can be imprecise. One person says to the other, “Be home *at* eleven o’clock.” The other hears, “Be home *around* eleven o’clock.” When the other is late, a discussion happens. Or sometimes an argument. There has been a “failure to communicate.” [movie, *Cool Hand Luke*, Strother Martin and Steve McQueen] Clearly, Joseph, Mary and Jesus misunderstood one another about leaving Jerusalem. The twelve-year-old Jesus lost track of time while in deep discussion with teachers in the temple. Oops. Sounds like similar discussions in many of our homes today, except it’s about video games or curfews.

**I.** I am amazed this story got into the gospel. Joseph or Mary must have told it. It is every parent’s worst nightmare – losing a child in a crowd like the Passover festival. At first, they casually looked among the friends and relatives, believing he was with other kids. Then, they became panicked and retraced their steps to the city. Where would he likely be? A restaurant or the town square? Maybe they finally went to the temple to pray for his safe return. And there he was. Mary’s stern question is every parent’s: why have you done this to your father and me? What were you thinking? Of course, the young Jesus didn’t “do” it to them. He wasn’t thinking; he was listening and asking questions of the teachers and forgot about the time. The Lord told them that should have quickly found him by starting in the temple. Joseph and Mary did not

understand him saying he was in his Father's house. The point made, he obeyed his parents and went home with them to continue growing up.

**Concl.** No family is without some miscommunication and reconciliation. Not even the "Holy Family." "It is a challenge to live in mutual respect and love: for parents to honor the dignity of their children, and children to respect the dignity of their parents" [*Living Liturgy, 2022*, Liturgical Press, p. 30]. In the Lord's time, family included literally the whole tribe into which one was born. Later, the Lord expanded the definition of family again to mean whoever hears his word and does his will. Our own definition of family expands as we grow and mature. Shared experiences of school or work; serving together during stressful times in the military or law enforcement; or finding people with similar

interests; all expand our understanding of family. It also expands our willingness to accept the shortcomings in each other and our families. **From a young age, the Lord knew he must be about his Father's business. Se must we.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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