

**EPIPHANY I 2011**  
**SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH**  
**FATHER JOHN ALTBERG**

**LUKE 2.41**



**MARY THIS IS JUST TERRIBLE...I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE ELSE TO LOOK...HE IS JUST GONE...I KNOW JOSEPH...I AM ABSOLUTELY BESIDE MYSELF...FIRST I WAS MAD...NOW I'M PETRIFIED...**

*The scene shifts...they arrive back in Jerusalem...*

**JESUS...WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN...WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING...WE HAVE SPENT TWO DAYS LOOKING FOR YOU...**

**WELL...I'VE BEEN RIGHT HERE IN THE TEMPLE TALKING TO THESE PEOPLE...IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR YOU TO GET SO UPSET ABOUT THINGS...**

**THAT'S QUITE ENOUGH JESUS...NO TALKING BACK...WE'LL DISCUSS THIS LATER...**

**Mary and Joseph roll their eyes in frustrated relief...make a pact to have a serious family discussion with him on the way back to Nazareth...doubtless wondering what they had got themselves into...**

Two weeks ago we celebrated Christmas...the Incarnation...God becoming human. Though we know the story well it is a concept hard to grasp...we can't quite relate at a personal level.

"I just don't get this...show me something I can really understand...tell me about God." It's a not **un**common demand...

It is now Epiphany...we are provided a series of explanations...manifestations...let's call them *showings*...things easy to understand at a very personalized level because we have been through many of them ourselves. Today and the next several weeks concentrate on recognizing Jesus...who he is...God as a pragmatic human being...the person we come to know in the Gospels.

We start with Jesus growing up as a young boy behaving in frustratingly youthful ways...wandering away from his parents, engaging in very precocious discussion with adults who are fascinated by how smart he seems to be and then indifferent when confronted with Mary and Joseph's

aggravated panic when they finally caught up with him.

The formalized narrative of the King James Bible does not quite fit the scene...I doubt seriously the discussion was all that calm! It is profoundly analogous to situations we have personally experienced as either parent or child...or in my case, both!

Today's Gospel clearly illuminates why today is popularly identified as *Holy Family Sunday*...it provides the only insight into the years of Jesus growing up and living an essentially normal existence in the home of Mary and Joseph. God provides a family setting to teach the order and reality of life...not always perfect...families raising children, even Mary and Joseph, have scary and interesting moments.

There is no day on which the Church teaches us more about the very natural way God planted himself in our midst as a human being than on this one...there is nothing at all abstract about the manner in which the story plays out. A very real family with very real opportunities of a precocious young boy on their very own hands!

We know nothing more about Jesus and his early family years. The narrative of Jesus and Mary and Joseph ends with today's Gospel. Undoubtedly Mary and Joseph told St Luke much more but it simply was not written down and we are left to fill in the blanks for ourselves. From St Matthew we know that Joseph was a carpenter in Nazareth so we can readily assume that Jesus spent at least some time working with Joseph in the business...the Nazareth Cabinet Company? But any real information about his growing up beyond the age of twelve is left to speculation.

Today we learn about Jesus as part of a fully functioning traditional family. He had a "normal childhood" and grew into adulthood quite naturally.

God delivered on his promise to make it easier to understand show himself to us...today tells the evolution of that process. We find new meaning and easier understanding as the story unfolds...that's why God did what he did, to make things easy for us to understand...and to participate.

