

Christ in the midst of COVID-19

written by Submitted Information |

There's a Bible story that we hear about quite rarely, but it's a snapshot of something we don't hear/know much about: Jesus's childhood.

Luke 2:41-52 (NABRE) recounts the story of finding the Child Jesus in the temple. Mary and Joseph depart Jerusalem with their relatives but don't realize that Jesus has stayed behind. They travel for a day before realizing that he isn't there in the caravan. He's gone. Lost. Or so they think. In the three days that follow, they search desperately for their son. Mary later describes the experience as filled with "great anxiety."

As I was meditating on these verses the other day when the parallel between our circumstances and those of the Holy Family became clear. Our Masses remain suspended for the foreseeable future, meaning they will remain closed through Easter. Yeah, Easter. The biggest celebration in the Church. Like Mary, I am finding myself filled with that "great anxiety" and I begin to ask, as she did, "Why have you done this to us?"

In this season of Lent, why has the practice of attending Mass (not through a livestream or video) been removed from our lives? What I felt the Lord speaking into my heart were two things:

1. This is, as many people have pointed out, more than we ever thought of giving up for Lent. Thanks to social distancing, empty grocery store shelves and lockdowns, we have perhaps sacrificed more than we bargained for. But rather than falling into despair, we can use this time to draw closer to the Redeemer. If you read through the Gospels, you will find that Jesus goes off to pray by Himself quite often. He seeks silence, the time away from the crowds. And in this "isolation" from the secular world, He is not entirely isolated. In this time, He is speaking to the Father. He is preparing for the miracles to come. Maybe, in this season of Lent/social distancing, we can join Him there. We can join Him in the desert as the Enemy tempts us, telling us that this is the end of the world or that we should give in to despair and anxiety. As the Enemy speaks these things through the media, we can stand beside our Savior in the desert and look forward in hope and faith to the resurrection that is to come. We can do exactly what Christ did in the desert. We can lean into the truth of His Word and the salvation that He brings.

2. Back to Luke 2:41-52. When Mary and Joseph find Jesus in the temple, He seems surprised that they didn't know where He would be. "Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house?" I believe Jesus is asking all of us that same question right now. When we get caught up in fear and anxiety, when we question where Jesus is in the midst of this, He answers. "Did you not know I would be in my Father's house?" Ephesians 3:17 invites us to make our hearts a home for Jesus. When we do this, do our hearts not become the "Father's house," or a home for Jesus? When we make space for the Savior in our hearts He heals our brokenness. When we ask where He is, He answers. He is in the nurses, doctors, grocery clerks, truckers, researchers, and everyone in between. And He is here with you, too.

If you, like the Blessed Mother and Joseph, have been anxiously searching and wandering, looking for the Lord, pause for a moment. He is here. In the desert. In the hearts of His

children. He is here. Come into the temple and sit at the feet of the Child Jesus. Salvation is on its way. The stone will be rolled away. He is in His Father's house, waiting for us.

Laurel Buxton writes from Siloam Springs.