



# The Holy See

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POPE FRANCIS

**CATECHESIS PREPARED BY THE HOLY FATHER  
FOR THE GENERAL AUDIENCE OF 5 MARCH 2025**

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**[[Multimedia](#)]**

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**Cycle of Catechesis – Jubilee 2025. Jesus Christ our Hope. I. The Infancy of Jesus. 8. “Son, why have you done this to us?” (Lk 2:49). The finding of Jesus in the Temple**

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

In this last catechesis dedicated to the childhood of Jesus, we will start from the episode in which, at twelve years of age, He stays in the Temple without telling His parents, who are anxiously looking for Him and find Him after three days. This account presents us with a very interesting dialogue between Mary and Jesus, which helps us to reflect on the *path of the mother of Jesus*, a journey that was certainly not easy. Indeed, Mary set out on a spiritual itinerary during which she advanced in her understanding of the mystery of her Son.

Let us look back at the various stages of this journey. At the beginning of her pregnancy, Mary visits Elizabeth and stays with her for three months, until the birth of the little John. Then, when she is now in her ninth month, due to the census she goes with Joseph to Bethlehem, where she gives birth to Jesus. After forty days they go to Jerusalem for the presentation of the child; and they return on a pilgrimage to the Temple every year thereafter. But with Jesus still a baby they had taken refuge in Egypt for a long time to protect Him from Herod, and only after the king's death did they settle again in Nazareth. When Jesus, having become an adult, begins His ministry, Mary is present and a protagonist at the wedding at Cana; then she follows Him “at a distance”, up to His last journey to Jerusalem, and until His passion and death. After the Resurrection, Mary

remains in Jerusalem, as Mother of the disciples, sustaining their faith while awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout this journey, the Virgin is a *pilgrim of hope*, in the strong sense that she becomes the “daughter of her Son”, the first of His disciples. Mary brought into the world Jesus, Hope of humanity; she nourished Him, made Him grow, followed Him, letting herself be the first to be shaped by the Word of God. As [Benedict XVI](#) said, “We see how completely at home Mary is with the Word of God ... we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the Word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate” (Encyclical [Deus caritas est](#), 41). This unique communion with the Word of God does not however save her the effort of a demanding “apprenticeship”.

The experience of twelve-year-old Jesus going missing during the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem frightens Mary to the point that she also speaks for Joseph as they take their son back: “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety” (*Lk* 2:48). Mary and Joseph felt the pain of parents with a missing child: they both thought that Jesus was in the caravan with their relatives, but after not seeing Him for an entire day, they began the search that would lead them to retrace their steps. Upon returning to the Temple, they discover that He who, in their eyes, until a short time before, was still a child to protect, suddenly seems grown up, capable now of getting involved in discussions on the Scriptures, of holding His own with the teachers of the Law.

Faced with His mother’s rebuke, Jesus answers with disarming simplicity: “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (*Lk* 2:49). Mary and Joseph do not understand: the mystery of God made child exceeds their intelligence. The parents want to protect that precious son under the wings of their love; instead, Jesus wants to live His vocation as the Son of the Father who is at His service and lives immersed in His Word.

Luke’s *infancy narratives* thus close with Mary’s final words, which recall Joseph’s paternity towards Jesus, and with Jesus’ first words, which recognize that this paternity traces His origins from that of His heavenly Father, whose undisputed primacy He acknowledges.

Dear brothers and sisters, like Mary and Joseph, full of hope, let us also set out in the footsteps of the Lord, who does not allow Himself to be contained by our precepts, and allows Himself to be found not so much in a place, but in the response of love to the tender divine paternity, a response of love that is filial life.