

## Who am I ?

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Almighty God,  
who wonderfully created us in your own image  
and yet more wonderfully restored us  
through your Son Jesus Christ:  
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity  
so we may share the life of his divinity.

My text can be found in today's gospel from Luke, chapter 2, verses 49 and 50:

**'Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house ?**

**But they did not understand what he said to them.'**

I loved being a teacher. And six years ago tomorrow, I took early retirement from my third school, Dame Alice Owen's, in Potters Bar, where I taught for over twenty-two years. There is real fun in being a teacher and I do miss being in a classroom with a bunch of bright, enthusiastic, twelve-year-olds. One of the real joys is helping any one of them understand something and to see their face light up and their smile when they grasp a difficult point.

Today's gospel passage is unique to Luke who may well have heard it from the Blessed Virgin Mary herself. In Jerusalem for Passover with his family is the twelve-years-old Jesus. To us Jesus is on the verge of being a teenager but in those days, already a Son of the Law, Bar Mitzvah, Jesus stands on the verge of

adulthood. And what does this boy, this lad, this young man do? When the folk from Nazareth pack up to go back home, Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem without telling his parents what he's doing and Mary and Joseph don't notice until they stop for the night and Jesus is not there to share their food. So back they go to the city anxious for his safety and after searching for most of a day, they find him calmly sitting in the Temple engaged in studying Torah with the teachers of the law who are well-impressed by his understanding and with the quality of his answers.

Poor Mary and Joseph. They just don't understand. But with the experience of the annunciation of Jesus' conception by an angel; the visit of the shepherds to the stable of an inn at night; the visit of the wise men with extraordinary gifts; the prophetic words of Simeon and Anna in the Temple when Jesus was just forty days old; and their flight to Egypt, you'd think Mary and Joseph would or might have guessed. But sadly, at this point, for Jesus to be in the Temple about his father's business seems not something that would have occurred to them. Well I guess they're glad to have found him and they take their boy, their son, back home to Nazareth where he remains with them under their authority until things really take off with his baptism in the Jordan by cousin John and his subsequent three year ministry. But that is still to come and sadly the gospels are silent about his childhood and youth and how Jesus prepared for what was still to come.

But my question this morning is not about Mary and Joseph's understanding or lack of it with regards their son – my question is when did Jesus know who he was and what he was meant to do. If you'd like to pause a moment and reflect a little

about your own life – when did you know who you were and what you were meant to be?

For me it was a gradual process. I did want to be a teacher from a very early age. It wasn't till I was in my forties that I wanted to be a priest. But knowing who I am and what I am has been a long journey and it is something I am still doing.

But in Jesus' case, was he aware he was different from the moment he was born? Was it from that first cry that he knew just how special he was or was it a gradual process? Certainly, he went into the wilderness for forty days to prepare for his ministry. Certainly, he spent a lot of time in prayer dialoguing with God. But Jesus seemed to know what he was about what he must do and how he should do it. He had no illusions about what awaited him ultimately in Jerusalem what it would mean to suffer, be rejected and abandoned to a painful death of the cross.

We can't be sure but in today's gospel, Luke at least paints a picture of a confident, self-aware lad who knew what he was about. To become a human being, Jesus sets aside something of what it was for God to be God but whether this involved his self-knowledge is an open question.

Well you must decide for yourself. I doubt Jesus doubted who he was or what he was up to but then if he did, it would be only human?

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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G: Sermon 27 : re who am I

