

This photo is available in  
the print version of *Children*.

**Young children will relate to Jesus as a child who, like themselves, wants to be listened to by adults. Often they have much to say to busy adults who could learn much by taking time to sit down and listen; their active and guileless minds may reveal profound insights.**

*Unknown artist, JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS from the WELTCHRONIK, German, Regensburg, c. 1400-10. Tempera colors and gold paint on parchment, MS. 33, FOL. 261. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. © The J. Paul Getty Museum.*

# In Her Heart

BY HEIDI J. HORNIK

*After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.*

Luke 2:46-52

**W**ith glorious colors this manuscript page wonderfully illustrates Luke 2:46-52 in a manner that speaks not only to its original audience in the early fifteenth century, but also to Christian families today.

From the raised throne, a typical placement for a medieval teacher, Jesus instructs the four bearded adult 'pupils' below him. In Luke these 'pupils' are teachers, and herein is the irony: the teachers have become the students of the boy Jesus. Several of them hold books and two students point to marked passages with their fingers; they raise questions and Jesus responds. A pupil in the foreground wearing a blue garment appears to hold his open book behind his back, though his head faces Jesus. (This odd-looking pose indicates the artist's lack of technical expertise in one-point linear perspective; the artist is unable to correctly position the figure in profile and show both his head facing Jesus and his arms holding the open book.)

From the right side of the throne, a stairway leads to a door that opens to the next scene in the biblical story. Jesus appears again in this *istoria* or multi-part narrative; but now, Mary and Joseph are there, encouraging Jesus to "come along." This technique is used frequently by artists of the fifteenth century to portray the next "frame" of the story and is often, but not always, read from left to right. Today's comic strips may find their compositional source in this type of narrative arrangement.

Unable to find her son, Mary construes his actions as disrespectful; she speaks in an anxious and even annoyed tone. The family trip to Jerusalem for Passover should have ended three days earlier, and she is ready to get home to Nazareth. Jesus, holding his wax writing tablet, defends his actions and tries to reason with his mother. The painting represents this quite realistically: Mary and Joseph face the direction that they want him to move, while Jesus is still talking about where he was and what he was doing, his Father's work! Despite his enjoyment of what he was doing and the fact that neither Mary nor Joseph understands him, Jesus obediently follows them. From this point, Mary's role in the story takes on a different tone; we're told that she "treasured these things in her heart." While continuing as the loving mother who will guide her son, she must accept not only the sometimes painful separation as he matures, but also the deep mystery of the earthly role given him by his Father.

Both children and parents can appreciate this painting and the story it depicts. Jesus is able to teach those of all ages who are willing to learn. Children will relate to Jesus as a child who, like themselves, wants to be listened to by adults. So often, children have much to say to busy adults who could learn much by taking time to sit down and listen; their active and guileless minds may reveal profound insights.

We must remember that God sent Jesus as a child, to learn and to grow within his family, community, and world. Mary and Joseph loved him and raised him, experiencing many of the same struggles felt by all parents. They learned, and so must all adults who guide children, to balance teaching with listening. We may gain much as we follow Mary's example and keep these things in our hearts.

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