

## Growing Up

*There are not many stories about Jesus growing up. We pretty much have to skip straight from his presentation at the temple as a baby to the one story we have about Jesus aged around 12 when his parents lose him in the temple. On this particular morning we explored the idea of why Jesus may have been at the temple – was this just an annual event or was it a bit more significant such as his Bar Mitzvah? We were able to borrow a prayer shawl, kippa and some other resources from our local primary school and Joel helped us out by dressing up and reading the Bible story for us, much as a boy or girl would do in a Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony. But it led us on to a discussion that it is important to mark the stages of growing up, and to recognise that we are all at different points of the process and can all learn from each other whatever our relative ages.*

It seems like only yesterday  
That we celebrated the birth  
of the baby Jesus  
with the down to earth shepherds  
and the exotic magi from distant lands  
with multitudes of angels singing  
and prophets saying amazing things  
at his presentation at the temple.

It seems like only yesterday  
That we were children ourselves  
Or at least younger children than we are now  
The turning years marked  
by birthday cakes and candles  
smiling and weaning and crawling  
followed by the first teetering steps  
rapidly progressing to the first day at school.

And now here is Jesus  
Well on the way to growing up  
Arriving at the temple with his family  
To mark an important milestone  
The day Jesus takes on the adult duty  
Of reading the books of the law for himself  
And becoming responsible for his own actions  
A day to celebrate and treasure.

So what markers do we celebrate  
Through childhood and teenage years?  
The transition to high school,  
The first paper round  
The journey through adolescence  
And the first fumbled kiss?  
Maybe here is our challenge  
To mark our growing into faith?

The celebration is done  
Time for Mary and Joseph to head home  
But Jesus is nowhere to be found  
His family must have been frantic  
How ironic to celebrate the entry to adulthood  
Only to lose Jesus in the bustle of the city

For that is the ambiguity of the teen years  
To be sometimes an adult and yet still a child.

But isn't that how we often feel  
Torn between wanting to grow up  
Yet not wanting to leave childhood behind?  
Being a child can be fun and care-free  
Yet leave us with a sense, like Wendy  
that there is more of life to discover  
But the adult world can seem confusing and scary  
And Peter Pan-like we may prefer not to grow up.

But in our story Jesus is found  
Much to his parents' vexation and amazement  
Talking and debating with the elders in the temple  
For Jesus is thriving in the responsibilities  
Of becoming Bar Mitzvah  
And to the elders' credit  
they admit Jesus as an equal among them  
teaching and being taught by a twelve year old.

And so like Mary and Joseph  
We who are grown up  
Are challenged that a twelve year old  
Can still behave as child  
and not always think of the consequences  
and yet like the elders we are challenged  
to listen to, learn from and give responsibility  
to our children as they grow in faith.

And so Jesus stands on the verge of adulthood  
Not yet aware of where his life's journey will lead  
Learning from the elders the stories and wisdom  
That will gather a group of friends around him  
And take unleavened bread from the Passover meal  
And speak of his body broken for the world  
And take blood-red wine from the Passover meal  
And reinterpret it as God's promise for the world.

*[share bread and wine]*

And so we stand at different stages of life  
Not yet aware of where our life's journey will lead  
Learning the stories and wisdom  
From our shared life together  
Taking and breaking the bread of daily life  
And recognising the pain of our own lives and of this world  
Taking and sharing the wine of celebration  
And risking stepping out into the future with hope.

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