

Meditation

An Amber Alert was issued today by police in Jerusalem. They are seeking a 12 year old male, dressed in a drab, homespun cloak and well-worn sandals passed down from his father. He has a wiry build, and although he is almost the height of a man, his voice is still that of a girl. Frantic parents plead with anyone who may have taken or seen their son to let a legionnaire know right away. They believed he was travelling home from the Passover festival in the company of his grandfather, Heli, but a day's journey from the city they discovered that he was missing.

Children sure change your lives, don't they? Before children, you thought that night was a time for sleeping. After children, you discover that night is a time for constant interruptions to sleep. Before children, you know that it takes 20 minutes in the morning to get up, showered, shaved, dressed, eat breakfast and leave for work. After children, you learn that it takes 20 minutes of cajoling to get them in their coat and boots. Before children, you think other parents are too controlling, too cautious. After your child goes missing for 20 minutes you panic and search everywhere until you find them. I remember when Christina, at the age of 3, disappeared. We found her in the local park, alone, having a ball on the slide, oblivious to anything or anyone else. Up three steps, down, run around, up three steps, down, run around..... Children turn your whole life upside down. In fact, they turn your whole world upside down, for they become the center of everything that you do.

As she grew, we knew that she was bright. Her mind was always ahead of her physical ability. She was often frustrated that she couldn't do what her mind conceived of, rolling over, crawling, going up and down stairs, walking, and the like. By the time she was in grade 3, well, according to the Montessori school – according to the public system she was only grade 1, she was reading and comprehending at a grade 8 level. And energy, it was like having triplets that all inhabited the same body. We discovered, eventually, that she had ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Her body was always in

motion. She seemed to have endless amounts of physical energy. And her mind, being active, jumped from one thought to another in rapid succession. Whenever she tried to concentrate on something, the slightest distraction captured her attention. It was tiring just watching it all.

The question I have is, did Jesus have ADHD? He couldn't seem to sit still for very long. A glance through Luke's gospel shows Jesus, starting at his baptism in the Jordan River in the wilderness near Jerusalem, spending 40 days wandering in the wilderness, travelling to Nazareth, and then to Capernaum, and then to Nain, then to Lake Tiberius, then to the land of the Gerasenes, opposite Galilee, on to Bethsaida, then Jericho and finally to Jerusalem. And the people he associated with. I don't mean the type of people; I mean the number of people. A constant stream of people wanted just a moment of his time. They came in crowds, like the crowd of 5,000 that he dined with on the hill near Bethsaida. And the variety of people too: men and women, servants and free, young and old and children alike, Jews and foreigners, socially acceptable people and outcasts; untouchables. And the things he did. I don't mean their miraculous nature, but the variety: casting out demons, calling disciples, cleaning lepers, healing paralytics, teaching, raising the dead, forgiving sins, telling parables, calming the weather, healing cripples, blessing children, restoring sight to the blind, clearing the temple, and always more parables and teachings. Jesus' body was always on the go, travelling from one place to another; his mind always jumping from one person to another and from one task to another.

But there is one other sign that Jesus may have had ADHD. People with ADHD have something that is known as hyper-attention or hyper-focus. When there is something that interests them, they can spend hours doing it, and are totally oblivious to outside distractions, or the passing of time. Was this what was happening as Jesus sat in the presence of the elders and the rabbis at the temple? Was Jesus hyper-focused on the stories and the tradition and the teachings of Judaism? Clearly he had forgotten about the time and about everyone else in his life, at least for the moment. And when Mary and Joseph,

panicked that perhaps he had been taken or sold into slavery or worse, when Mary and Joseph found him, he seemed almost miffed at them. Didn't you know that I would be here, in my Father's house?

Did Jesus have ADD, complete with hyper-attention, or does it just look like that to us because we have DAD (Divine Apathy Disorder)? I mean, when is the last time that we spent more than three consecutive days immersed totally in the study of our relationship with God, or in the study of our tradition? Oh, sure, we come out to church most Sundays. Some of us even pray from time to time. But how well do we really know the Bible? How many have even read it through once, cover to cover? How comfortable do we feel when we are asked to pray aloud in a group? Perhaps the problem isn't that Jesus was hyper-focused on his tradition's teachings, perhaps the problem is that we don't spend enough time attending to our own spiritual nurture. That would be especially true as a society. We seem to think that the physical and social health of our children is paramount, and their spiritual health isn't even on our radar.

Don't get me started on society.... Let's keep the focus here, on us, because it is through us that the rest of society will change, or not, but that depends on us, that depends on whether or not we learn our tradition and our practices, in turn defining our character and shaping our identity. Changing our character and identity is exactly what Jesus came to do. He came to make us new creations, to give us new lives, and that is exactly what changing our character and identity does; it gives us new lives. As new people, we in turn move out and change the society around us, instead of allowing it to change us, at least, that's the plan.

Jesus studied the teachings and traditions of Judaism, and increased in wisdom and in divine favour. My wish for this community is that we too, through being intentional about our spiritual health, could grow in wisdom and in divine favour, that we could change the world around us, even if it is only one

person and one situation at a time. As we think about what New Year's resolutions we may make in a couple of days, may your spiritual health be at the top your list.