

Jesus Grew in Nazareth

*Taken from the book of Fr. P. Ribes, s.j. "To be Like Jesus"
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Intent of these notes

- ✓ *That we may know and love Jesus more.*
- ✓ *To help us grow to maturity as Jesus did*
- ✓ *That we may strive to grow in a balanced way.*
- ✓ *That we may not stop growing till we die.*

PART ONE Jesus Grew Like Anyone of Us

Introductory Thoughts

- The Word of God - the Son of God - when he came into our world to be our Saviour could have come already as a grown-up person.
- God the Father, however, decided that Jesus should be like anyone of us except sin, and so Jesus was born from a human mother just like any one of us.
- He was born an infant, and he grew, like one of us, from childhood to manhood
- He experienced all the stages of human growth.

Stages in the Human Growth of Jesus

- He was a helpless baby as all babies are.
- As a little child he was as all children are.
- When a boy at Nazareth, he was like all his peers, boisterous, full of life and mischief.
- As a responsible and self-assured youth, he helped his mother at home, and assisted St. Joseph in their little carpentry shop.
- He also had to assert himself and learn to be independent from his parents.
- Finally, in due time, as a mature man and a self-controlled, responsible and well-balanced person, he left his home to start his mission, the work his Heavenly Father had assigned Him.

Jesus Grew the Right Way

- Jesus' growth to maturity was not a growth by "addition" but one of steady development.
- He lived every stage of growth to the full and drew from each of them all the experiences and positive benefits.
- Maturity was not given to him from the very start like a finished product, but he had to obtain it by progressive and laborious efforts.
- He experienced the pains and joys of growing; courageously facing the difficulties each stage of human growth challenges us with..
- Jesus did not become a perfect human being in one day; rather he had to actualize his potential, slowly and painfully, day by day, hour by hour.

- He did not grow by accumulating life experiences but by assimilating them.
- His maturity was not the result of growing in years, but the outcome of the quality of his daily living.
- Jesus kept growing beyond his Nazareth years. He went on maturing through his public life, passion, crucifixion and death.

Consequences from the Way Jesus Grew

- Jesus came to know through personal experience, what it is to be a baby, a child, a boy, a youngster, a youth, and a man!
- This is why Jesus can understand all our problems, anxieties, expectations, dreams and frustrations at any stage of human life.
- By reflecting on the way Jesus grew we can learn:
 - How to grow like him and to be ‘Jesus-like’ persons in our world today.
 - How to understand and sympathize with our children, youngsters and youth in their struggles as they grow to maturity.
- Human growth should never stop. We have to keep growing all along life.
- Growth is a never-ending process.
- As long as we live we have to be willing to assimilate ever new experiences, new discoveries, meeting new people and facing new challenges.
- Even old people have to keep growing!
- The day a person stops growing, he dies!

PART TWO Jesus Grew in a Balanced Way

Bible Passages on the Growth of Jesus

In his Gospel, Luke describes in 5-6 lines, how Jesus grew in Nazareth. He tells us that Jesus grew progressively and steadily in a balanced way.

Until he began his Public Ministry – at the age of about 30 years - Jesus grew in Nazareth

in age,
in wisdom and
in grace

Lk 2/39-40 After the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem

“When they finished doing all that was required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their home town of Nazareth and **The child grew in age, in wisdom and in grace**”.

Lk 2/51-52 After the Boy Jesus was found in the Temple

“So, Jesus went back with them – *Mary and Joseph* – to Nazareth and he was obedient to them.... **And Jesus grew in body and in wisdom and in grace before God and men**”.

Points for Reflection

- To become a balanced human person like Jesus, in what areas of life have we to grow? Why? How?
- In what areas of life do you need still to grow most? Why?
- Mention some of the important things Jesus learned in Nazareth?
- What's the difference between growing in knowledge and growing in wisdom?
- Mention some of the most important factors or things that help us grow.
- Is growth easy? Why?
- Is it pleasant? Why?
- How much time it takes to grow as mature persons?
- Mention some of the obstacles and blocks to growing?
- Is there an end to growing? Explain.
- Did Jesus stop growing at 30 in Nazareth? When did he stop growing? Explain.
- Should old persons still grow? How? Why?
- Explain the following sentences:
 - ✓ Some old people are only old; some others are old and 'oldish'.
 - ✓ Some young people are old, whilst some old people are young.

Jesus Grew in Nazareth

- He grew proportionally and integrally in all spheres of life.
- He developed - he actualized - his potential equally at all levels.

Jesus grew in age:

- **Physically:** Healthy body, strength and physical endurance.
Confirm this from the Gospel texts.
- **Intellectually:** Thinking power, knowledge, critical mind, discernment, verbal skills, power of expression, perceptiveness, originality, creativity, etc.
Confirm it from the Gospel texts

Jesus grew in wisdom:

- **Emotionally:** how to love, control his feelings and sentiments, grow in self-knowledge, self-acceptance, assertiveness, sexual integration, feeling for others, unselfishness, cultivate responsible freedom, etc....
Confirm it from the Gospel texts
- **Socially:** Concern for others, developing true and lasting friendships, justice, leadership qualities, empathy, availability, hospitality, respect for others and their rights, ability to share, etc...
Confirm it from the Gospel texts

Jesus grew in grace

- **Morally:** Right moral judgments, free from sin, free from guilt, free from self-centredness, overcoming temptations, respecting others' conscience, control of one's passions, etc.
Confirm it from the Gospel texts
- **Spiritually:** Right image of God, trust in God's providence, personal prayer life, obedience to God's will, discovering God in others, faith and hope in God, etc
Confirm it from the Gospel texts

ACTIVITES

Activity one:

Write one of the sketches of Jesus' character or personality mentioned below.

Use your imagination and fantasy.

- 1. Jesus' character or personality as a youngster in Nazareth**
- 2. Jesus' character or personality as a young man in Nazareth.**
- 3. Jesus' character or personality as a fully grown-up man during the years of his public ministry.**

Activity two:

Cartoon Drawings of balanced and unbalanced growth

You must have seen::

- ✓ People who had strong and healthy bodies, yet they were ignorant and with underdeveloped intellectual powers.
- ✓ Others who were highly qualified and educated, yet emotionally stunted. People like grown-up children in the way they felt and in their emotional reactions.
- ✓ Some others emotionally were grown-up, but spiritually speaking they were babies. Their prayer life and their faith, hope and love for God were childish or deficient
- ✓ Still others were spiritually grown-up, but physically underdeveloped.

Drawing Work;

A) Draw caricature cartoons in a simple sketch style of such like people:

- ✓ A person with a healthy and strong body, yet intellectually underdeveloped.
(Drawing could be a figure with a big body and a tiny head)
- ✓ A person who is intellectually developed yet emotionally stunted.
(Drawing could be a figure with a big head and small heart)
- ✓ A person who is emotionally mature yet, physically underdeveloped.

- (Drawing could be a figure with of big heart, and a very small body)*
- ✓ A person with a healthy body and well educated yet morally underdeveloped.
(Drawing could be a figure with big body and a big head but with a blackened heart)

B) Next, draw the caricature cartoon of your own present growth - balanced or unbalanced as it may be.

C) Finally, draw a caricature cartoon of Jesus growth and maturity as we see Him portrayed in the Gospels

Closing Reflection and Prayer

Compare your caricature cartoon with the one of Jesus.

- How balanced is your growth?
- Can you grow a little more like Jesus? How?
- What will you do?

Spend some time in prayer to Jesus asking for help to grow a little more balanced like him

NOTE; the sketches of Jesus' Character and Personality, as well the caricature cartoons could be share among the participants at a group session.