

Tuesday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 12:46-50): While Jesus was speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers appeared outside, wishing to speak with him. Someone told him, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking to speak with you.” But he said in reply to the one who told him, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

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Today, to start with, the Gospel surprises us: “Who is my mother?” (Mt 12:48), wonders Jesus. It would seem the Lord is showing a contemptuous attitude towards Mary, his mother. Nothing of the sort! What Jesus wants to make quite clear is that, in his own eyes —God's eyes— the crucial value of a person does not lie on flesh and blood facts, but on the spiritual disposition to accept God's will: “And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Mt 12:49-50). At that time, God's will was for Jesus to evangelize those who were listening and for these ones to actually listen to him. This was a priority over any other value, no matter how dear. To abide by his Father's will, Jesus Christ had left Mary and now He was preaching far away from home.

But, who was ever more willing to abide by God's will than Mary? “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). This is why, St. Augustine says that Mary accepted God's word with a spirit of obedience first and, only afterwards, she conceived it in her womb for the Incarnation.

In other words: God loves us as per our saintliness. The Virgin Mary is the most blessed, and, therefore, the most loved. However, God does not love us because we may be saints. It is rather the other way round: we are saints because He loves us. The first one to love is always our Lord (cf. 1Jn 4:10). Mary proves it when she says: “For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness” (Lk 1:48). In God's eyes our own lowliness is evident; but He wants to magnify us, to sanctify us.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“Whatever the hand of my Lord holds out to me I will accept with gladness, submission and love. Your holy will is my repose. In it is contained all my sanctity, and all my eternal salvation, for doing God's will is the greatest glory.” (Saint Faustina Kowalska)

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“We must learn to entrust ourselves more to divine Providence, to ask God for the strength to come out of ourselves and to conform our will to his” (Francis)

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“Becoming a disciple of Jesus means accepting the invitation to belong to God's family, to live in conformity with His way of life: ‘For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother’ (Mt 12:49).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, N° 2233)