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, the Gospel presents us with a surprising opening: “Who is my mother?” (Mt 12:48), Jesus asks. It seems as if the Lord has a dismissive attitude toward Mary. This is not the case. What Jesus wants to make clear here is that in his eyes —the eyes of God! — a person's true worth does not lie in the fact that they are made of flesh and blood, but in the spiritual disposition to accept God's will: “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 moment, God's will was for him to evangelize those He was speaking to and for them to listen to him. That took precedence over any other value, no matter how dear it might be. To do the Father's will, Jesus Christ had left Mary and was now preaching far from home.

But who has been more willing to do 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). For this reason, St. Augustine says that Mary first received the word of God in her spirit through obedience, and only then conceived it in her womb through the Incarnation.

In other words: God loves us to the extent of our holiness. Mary is most holy and, therefore, most beloved. However, being holy is not the reason God loves us. On the contrary, because He loves us, He makes us holy. The Lord is always the first to love (cf. 1 Jn 4:10). Mary teaches us this when she says: “He has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness” (Lk 1:48). In God's eyes we are small; but He wants to exalt us, to sanctify us.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “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)

- “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)

- “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, Nº 2233)