August 12th: Memorial of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, religious

Gospel text (*Mk* 3:31-35): The mother of Jesus and his brothers arrived at the house. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, “Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you.” But he said to them in reply, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

«Whoever does the will of God is (…) mother to me»

Fr. Josep Mª MASSANA i Mola OFM
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, in the liturgical celebration of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, the Gospel speaks of Jesus’ mother. When they tell Him that She and His relatives are looking for Him, He seems to be eluding to communicate with them: "Who are my mother and my brothers?" (Mk 3:33). But in actual fact it is a tribute to His Mother. He presents her as one who does God’s will: «whoever does God’s will is (...) my mother" (Mk 3:35). The Virgin Mary knows how to fulfill always what God wants. Doing God’s will is a synonym of obeying, and obedience is based on humility and meekness.

Always, and throughout her life, and especially in her "let it be done to me", the Virgin Mary was repeating it in every situation, in every event. It was her favorite prayer to connect with God. Furthermore, her behavior of absolute obedience, of searching for God’s plan in Her respect, constituted her very life.

We may wonder why the day of Saint Jane Frances de Chantal we should precisely hear this Gospel of Mark. The answer is that this saint had a soul disposition very much like the Virgin Mary, whom she knew how to imitate. Saint Francis of Sales was her spiritual director as a married woman, as a widow and as a nun. He shaped her in humility, she who belonged to a noble family, and in obedience, she who was accustomed to giving orders.

The acceptance of God's will with a spirit of obedience, meekness and humility, modeled the Order of the Visitation which she founded with the help of St. Francis of Sales. She writes in her rule: "humility is the source of all other virtues. Let it be without bounds; make it the reigning principle of all your actions”.