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Tuesday's Gospel: The Church is a Family

Gospel for Tuesday in the 16th
Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 12:46-50*)

While Jesus was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him.

But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and 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 Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

Commentary

Throughout his public life, Jesus always puts his mission first, and every other earthly tie second. The Kingdom of Heaven is above any other commitment. Even family ties, so crucial in Jewish culture, are of less importance. Jesus warns his listeners that anyone who loves his family more than Him is not worthy of Him (cf. *Mt* 10:34-37).

On this occasion, the members of his family went to Capernaum, where they knew they could find Jesus with his disciples to speak with Him. Perhaps they wanted to urge Him to be more cautious, in the face of growing opposition from the scribes

and Pharisees. Finding Jesus engaged in teaching his disciples, they stayed outside and sent a message.

They expected Jesus would stop teaching for a moment and come to speak with them. But Jesus took advantage of the opportunity to proclaim a new teaching to his disciples. Stretching out his hand towards them, he solemnly declared: “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.” His words open up unexpected horizons for them. Jesus was building a new family based on spiritual ties and not on genealogy or kinship. To belong to it, Jesus says, the only thing required is the commitment to do God’s will. Anyone can join.

The ties formed between Christians are very close. Jesus likens them to family ties, which shows that He considers natural families as a

blessing, as schools of fraternity and love. Indeed, “Christ chose to be born and grow up in the bosom of the holy family of Joseph and Mary”

(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1655). But the new family that He is forming is seen as an even higher blessing, and will extend the love of the Holy Family to all men and women.

We belong to that family: “the Church is nothing other than the family of God” (*Catechism*, no. 1655). Jesus taught his disciples our great responsibility for one another. On the eve of his Passion he gave them a new commandment: “that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (*Jn* 13:34-35).

And this charity manifests itself in a very practical way. We have to frequently ask ourselves whether we are finding ways to “bear one

another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (*Gal* 6:2).

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