

Homily based on the readings from January 27, 2026 (2 Samuel 6.12b-15, 17-19; Mark 3.31-35)

*For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.*

At first glance, this statement from today's Gospel comes across as being a bit harsh. If we are not careful, we might even get the impression that our Lord is speaking dismissively about his family – in particular, about his Blessed Mother – and that he values his newfound followers more than his own flesh and blood. This conversation, in fact, is often cited by our Protestant brothers and sisters – to support their criticism of our own Marian devotion. If Jesus held his mother in such low esteem, so the argument goes, why do *Catholics* treat her with such reverence?

This misunderstanding demonstrates the perils of taking a tiny piece of Scripture completely out of context. It is obvious, even from a superficial reading of the Gospels, that Jesus would never be disrespectful to his own mother. In the Gospel of Matthew, for example,

he repeatedly affirms the Old Testament commandment to “honor your father and your mother.” On a more personal level, consider the account of the Crucifixion that appears in the Gospel of John. As he was dying on the Cross, our Lord entrusted his Blessed Mother and the Apostle John to each other’s care: “Woman, behold, your son!” – “Behold, your mother!” These are not the words of somebody who views his mother as being worthless or unimportant. These are the words of someone who profoundly *loves* and *respects* his mother – and wants the rest of *us* to do so as well.

So how *are* we supposed to interpret today’s Gospel reading? What *did* Jesus actually mean? The most helpful perspective is to view Christ’s statement not as a *rejection*, but as an *invitation*. Jesus is not *rejecting* his family in favor of his followers. Quite the opposite – he is *inviting* his followers to become *part* of his family. The Virgin Mary is only a member of the Holy Family because she fearlessly accepted God’s plan for her life. To a lesser extent, Jesus is giving all of us the same kind of opportunity: *whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and*

*mother*. If we listen to the Lord's teachings and obey his commands, we can follow in our Blessed Mother's footsteps. None of us will ever have the same relationship that Mary has with Jesus – that connection is utterly unique – but all of us can be members, in our own way, of Christ's extended family.

Whenever we join a new family – for example, by marriage or adoption – we are not just establishing a relationship with a single individual. We are becoming part of a larger whole, creating connections with countless siblings, parents, cousins, aunts, and uncles – many of whom we may never meet. The same is true for our spiritual family. The bonds that link us to Christ also unite us to our brothers and sisters *in* Christ.

Nobody ever walks the journey of faith on his own. We are all part of the crowd seated around Jesus, part of the family he has gathered to himself. Membership in any family comes with joys and sadnesses, with nurturing and responsibilities – but, first and foremost, we have to accept the *invitation*.