

# IN 24 FEBBRAIO 2018

## 6. The Listening Woman – Who Is My Mother? (Mk. 3:31-35)

### The Faces of Mary in Sacred Scripture

"Mary is happier to receive the faith of Christ than to conceive the flesh of Christ." With these words, St. Augustine offers us the clue to the interpretation of this Gospel text which has raised up, since antiquity, vivacious discussions and perplexities in relation to Mary and kinship with Jesus. The text, the only one in the entire Gospel of Mark in which he speaks of the Mother of Jesus, seeks to highlight something essential concerning the Mystery of Christ, the Mystery of His Mother, and the Mystery of all who desire to follow Jesus.

Jesus is teaching the crowd when, without forewarning, his relatives come to look for him. Mary is also present among them. What were those sitting around Him thinking? Perhaps they envied Jesus's family, above all His mom, for the great privilege of having been able to be so close to Him! Jesus realizes this and takes the opportunity to make them all understand that it is not blood ties which determine profound communion with Him or belonging to His Family, the Church. The determining factor is obedience to His Word, which introduces us into the Kingdom of His Father. By putting His word into practice, we enter into an interpersonal relationship with Jesus that has a family flavor, with the affection, solidarity, spontaneity, intimacy, and reciprocal giving proper to it.

Mary is the most perfect, the deepest, and the most fecund realization of this familiarity with Jesus, in whom the Father desires to involve all his creatures. What counts more, in fact, is not having conceived the Son of God in her womb but having conceived Him in the intimacy of her heart. We can be certain that the conception came about only when the Word heard was also put into practice. Jesus himself draws a parallel between this process and the reality of the seed that falls into good ground and produces much fruit. Just as Mary kept every word and every gesture of Jesus in her heart and bore much fruit for the salvation of the world, so, in the same way, those who "receive the Word with a good and generous heart, observe it, and give fruit through their perseverance" become 'good soil' for the Kingdom of the Father. (Lk. 8:15) Listening to Jesus' Word and doing the Will of the Father are all moments of the same process, in which Mary can be for us a Guide and Teacher so that we, too, can be Jesus' true Family: His brothers, sisters, and mothers.

### **Praying with the Word (Mark 3:31-35):**

1. I become aware of God's presence. I imagine that I am in the scene in the midst of the Disciples who are listening to Jesus speak of the Kingdom of His Father. I ask for the grace to understand the relationship that Jesus wants to create with me and with all his Disciples.
2. I invoke the help of the Holy Spirit by repeating this (or another) prayer slowly:  
"Come, O Holy Spirit, come through Mary, and give us a huge heart that is open to your silent, powerful, and inspiring Word and closed to every base ambition. Give us a heart that is great and strong so we may love all, serve all, and suffer with all. Give us a big and robust heart that is blessed to beat with God's heart alone." (Paul VI)

3. I read Mark 3:31-35 slowly and reflect a while on these three points:
  - **A relationship with the flavor of a family** (vss. 31-32): The sudden arrival of Jesus' relatives incites the curiosity and admiration of the crowd. Do I feel the desire to become "one of Jesus' true relatives"? What do I do to grow more and more in familiarity with Him?
  - **Casting his gaze around Him** (vss. 33-34): Jesus does not take His gaze away from the crowd. He wants to include all among His closest family and, even within a crowd, He loves each one personally, one-on-one. Today He focuses His gaze squarely on me and invites me to go more deeply into relationship with Him.
  - **Listening, so as to put into practice** (v. 35): only the one who does the Father's will is Jesus' true relative. Are there certain aspects of Jesus' teaching which I have heard many times but do not put into practice? What is stopping me?
4. I finish this prayer with a heart-to-heart conversation with Mary: I express my sentiments, my joy, my gratitude, my doubts, and all the struggles to her that I experience when listening to the Word of God and putting it into practice.
5. Our Father

After having concluded this prayer, I sit still and reflect a little: What has the Holy Spirit said to me through this prayer? Has He encouraged me? Has He invited me to conversion? How do I think I may correspond to the gift received in this prayer?