

July 2020

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mt 12:50)

Matthew’s Gospel recounts an episode in Jesus’ life that could at first seem relatively unimportant. His mother and relatives of the family went to Capernaum, where Jesus was staying with his disciples and proclaiming to everyone there the Father’s love.

They had probably walked far to find him and they wanted to talk to him. They did not enter the place where Jesus was, but sent a message, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, asking to speak with you.”

The family dimension was certainly very important for the people of Israel; they themselves were considered to be “children” of God and heirs to his promises. Furthermore, the people of Israel regarded one another as “brothers.”

But Jesus opened up an unexpected perspective. With a solemn gesture of his hand, he pointed to his disciples and said:

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Jesus revealed a new dimension: anyone at all can feel part of this family, if that person is committed to knowing and fulfilling the will of the one Father.

Anyone: adult or child, man or woman, healthy or ill, from every culture and social position. Anyone: every person is made in the image of God who is Love. Indeed, each person is a being created by God, with whom he or she can enter into a relationship of knowledge and friendship.

Therefore, anyone can do the will of God, which is to love him and one another. And, if we love, Jesus recognizes us as his family — his brothers and sisters. This is such a huge opportunity that it catches us by surprise; it frees us from the past, from our fears, from our way of seeing things.

In this perspective, even our limitations and fragility can be “launching pads” that propel us toward fulfillment. Everything takes on a qualitative leap.

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In a certain way, we too can be the “mother” of Jesus. Just as Mary made herself available to God from the moment of the Annunciation, up to Calvary, and then on to the birth of the Church, so we too can give birth and rebirth to Jesus in ourselves by living the Gospel. Then,

through our mutual love, we can contribute to generating the presence of Jesus in the collectivity.

On one occasion, when Focolare founder Chiara Lubich was addressing a group of people eager to put into practice the Word of God, she said:

“Be a family. Are there people among you who are undergoing a spiritual or a moral trial? Be understanding of them as a mother would, and even more. Enlighten them through your word or example. Don’t let them lack the warmth of a family, but rather increase it.

“Are there people among you who are suffering physically? May they be our preferred brothers and sisters.

“Never put any activity of any kind before that of generating the spirit of family with those brothers and sisters with whom you are living.

“And wherever you go to bring Christ’s ideal ... the best thing to do will be to create with discretion and prudence, but with solid conviction, the spirit of a family. It is a humble spirit; it wishes the best for everyone; it is not proud; it is ... true charity.”

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Each one of us in everyday life can discover the task that the Father has entrusted to us for the building up of the great human family.

In Homs, Syria, more than 150 children, mostly Muslims, attend afterschool sessions in a Greek Orthodox school. Sandra, the director, explained:

“We are a team of teachers and specialists, and our aim is to create a family atmosphere of welcome and support. Our work is based on dialogue and the promotion of values.

“Many children are affected by the trauma and suffering that they have experienced. Some are apathetic, others aggressive. We want to rebuild their trust in themselves and in others. The war often causes division among families, but here they find the desire and the hope to start again.”

Letizia Magri