

June 9, 2024 – Third Sunday after Pentecost

“Brothers and Sister in Christ Jesus” by Pastor Julio Romero

Gospel: Mark 3:20-35

Long ago, there was a farmer who had problems. He was advised to go and see his pastor, who was wise and would help him sort his life out. The Pastor asked him why he had come.

“I’m a farmer,” he said. “I love farming, but the problem is that sometimes there’s no rain, and we really struggle those years. Of course, sometimes we have the other problem, and there’s too much rain and the floods destroy everything.” But the man didn’t stop there.

“I also have a wife, I love her, truly, but sometimes we don’t get along. To be honest, occasionally, she gets on my nerves. And my kids! They’re lovely kids. They’re great. Sometimes, though, they misbehave like you wouldn’t believe...”

The farmer went on and on like this. His in-laws were bothering him, he had money worries, he’d often tossed and turned in bed at night wondering about the meaning of life, and his left knee hurt. The Pastor listened patiently, smiled, and simply said, *“I can’t help you”*.

The farmer was astonished.

The Pastor continued, *“Every person has 83 problems, every one of us. And there’s nothing you can do about it. Maybe you can do this or that to fix them, but once one problem is gone, another one springs up in its place. More problems are coming – for example, you will lose your family and loved ones one day, and you yourself will die. That’s a problem you certainly can’t do anything about.”*

The farmer, probably beginning to regret his visit, couldn’t help but ask angrily, *“Well, I thought you could help! What’s the point of everything you teach if you can’t solve my problems?”*

“Well, I can maybe help you with your eighty-fourth problem,” he said.

“Eighty-fourth problem? Well, what’s that?”

“It’s that you don’t want to have any problems.”

In our Gospel story for today, it seems that Mary and her family had a problem. In their eyes, one member of the family was not behaving the right way. His name is Jesus.

He had mixed in with the wrong crowd; some of them were fishermen, a couple of them were rebels who dreamed of getting rid of the Romans, another one was a tax collector that no one cared for. And if this was not enough, He was exorcising people. No wonder some said that He had gone out of His mind.

What would you do if one of your children would go on to do what Jesus did? Probably you would do what Mary did and try to bring him back home.

It seems that Mary was determined to do that. She even brought reinforcements, all of Jesus' brothers and sisters came with Mary to make sure that Jesus was going to go back home with them.

Yes, Jesus was not supposed to be doing all that. He was at least thirty years old, his place was His village, working in the family carpentry shop, married to one of the girls in the village, having kids and taking care of the family sheep and goats, not hanging out with a rough crowd, casting out demons and making powerful enemies like the scribes and Pharisees.

It is clear that Mary and her children got their 84th problem in their hands with the way Jesus was behaving. What Mary and her children didn't know is that what Jesus was not supposed to do is exactly what He was meant to do.

Besides inviting people to follow Him, healing them, and preaching the Good News of God, what else was Jesus doing? It is in this question that I find the main point for this message.

Jesus was creating a new family, and when He asked, "*Who are my mother and my brothers?*", He looked at those who sat around him and said, "*Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.*"

In His answer, Jesus was sending a strong message not only to Mary and to His brothers and sisters, but He was also sending a strong message to those who were sitting with Him and listening to Him.

Jesus was creating a new family, a new family that would be known for their love for one another, for their commitment to do God's work and follow His words.

I find it quite interesting that Jesus started forming that family with those who were well known for being the unwanted ones, the tax collectors, and other people known as sinners, the very people nobody wanted to have any ties with. It shows that God's ways to carry out His plans are kind of strange, aren't they?

It was in those people where Jesus found His brothers and sisters, and the people themselves found theirs too, a family that didn't stop with Jesus and His disciples and His followers. We ourselves have found our brothers and sisters in His name and in His church.

We all here are brothers and sisters. We belong to different churches, live in different towns, but we gather here today under one name, the name of Jesus Christ. We all are baptized Christians and members of the universal church of Christ. And let me tell you, those spiritual ties are very strong. I ask you why? How many times have you told yourselves, "I have enough problems of my own, I don't need to bother with all those difficult people at the church", but you keep coming, why? Because you love Jesus, because you love your brothers and sisters, and even when they give you the 84th problem that you don't need in your life, you are still loving and forgiving them. To me, that is faith, that is commitment.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I truly believe that being part of God's family is a blessing, a visible blessing and sometimes an invisible one. I don't think that we really know or will ever know how God blesses us for being part of His family and for loving Jesus the way we do.

As sisters and brothers in the name of Jesus, we are facing big challenges: our churches are shrinking, the Lord's family is getting smaller. This is the time to love one another even more, this is the time to show others that we love one another the way Jesus loves us. This is the time to work together, to care for one another like never before. This is the time to renew our love and commitment to Jesus and to one another.

So that one day, when we will be no more, nobody will say that those people didn't care for one another, didn't love one another and the one they professed to believe in.

Let's continue carrying out our ministry with strong family ties to Jesus and to each other. We are brothers and sisters in Jesus' name. We share spiritual family ties that in the eyes of God will never be broken here on earth and neither in heaven. In our baptism and through the blood of Jesus, God has made us brothers and sisters forever. **Amen.**

