Walking with Mary “True Family of Jesus”

by Dr. Mary Healy

There is no more powerful human bond than a mother’s love for her child. And yet so much of the mystery of motherhood is a letting go—surrendering back to God this child whom God has entrusted to you, whom you’ve given birth to and nurtured and taught and comforted and sacrificed for. Even Mary, the mother of the Son of God, had to experience that surrender.

This Scripture passage shows it clearly. After living a very ordinary life as a carpenter, Jesus had begun his public ministry. He was doing miracles, crowds were gathering around him… and rumors were beginning to circulate that he was out of his mind (Mark 3:21). Mary and some of Jesus’ “brothers” (male relatives) came to him, perhaps thinking they needed to help get things under control. But when they arrived, they found such a packed crowd around Jesus that they couldn’t get near him. So they sent word through the crowd, naturally expecting that when Jesus heard that his family was calling, he would immediately interrupt his teaching to respond. Surely his family members have VIP access!

And yet instead of going out to them, Jesus said something that must have been shocking in the culture of the time, where family took absolute priority over everything: “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

This was surely a painful moment of detachment for Mary. She was without sin, but that does not at all mean that she had full knowledge. Like everyone else, she had to grow in her understanding of the plan of God (see Luke 2:19, 50-51). She did not yet fully grasp the scope and significance of her Son’s mission. She could not keep him for herself, but would have to share him with the whole world! He was founding a new family, the Church, whose members are united around him in a bond of love and loyalty far stronger than any blood relationships. And she would one day have a far greater role in that new family of God than she could yet realize.

So Mary’s detachment from Jesus on an earthly level was for the sake of the unimaginably greater mission God had for her. Without yet understanding, she trusted God and let her faith be stretched.

Jesus’ last sentence, “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother,” reveals the absolute priority in his heart: to please his heavenly Father. The only condition for entering God’s family is to do his will, just as Jesus did. And to do God’s will, one must first learn what it is by sitting and listening to Jesus, just as the crowd is doing. So Jesus was not rejecting his Mother but rather affirming her on a new basis. She is in fact his first and best disciple, the one who believed God’s word and embraced God’s will with all her heart (see Luke 1:38, 45).
Pray, Ponder, and Put Pen to Paper

Question 1:
Is there anything in your life that the Lord is calling you to let go of and surrender to him? What has your reaction been so far? What will it be?

Question 2:
What are some ways you have made doing God’s will the priority in your life? What are some ways you have yet to do so?

Question 3:
What does it mean to you that you are Jesus’ sister, and he is your brother? Are you aware that you have VIP access to him? How does that truth impact your day?