

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**The Family of God**    Twenty-fifth Week in Ordinary Time    Tuesday, September 26, 2017  
8:15 AM    Ez 6:7-8, 12b, 14-20;    **Lk8:19-21**    (Sts. Cosmas and Damian, martyrs)  
(Jesus is talking about a new kind of family, a new kind of relationship.)

**“My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it.”**

Christians have built up very pious stories about the so-called Holy Family, in which they imagine three: Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, lived together. That’s quite unlikely; that is not the arrangements that existed in the ancient world. **Families lived in larger units.** Africanus, one of the early Fathers of the Church, said that Joseph was an older man who had been married before and had children, and that is the reference to the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Whether that is true or not of course no one knows; it doesn’t say anything about it in the Bible. But it does say brothers and sometimes sisters.

Now some people point out that the word “brothers” in Aramaic, *achim*, could mean cousins or other relatives. That is true, but of course the Bible is not written in Aramaic. It’s written in Greek, and the word is *adelphoi*, and that doesn’t mean cousins; but it could have that meaning if it was translating something that was common to the talk and the conversation of ancient Christian people. Ultimately we actually don’t know about Jesus’ family. But what we do have many **intimations of is some not so friendly relationships.** It says in Mark, for example, that **Jesus’ family thought he was crazy, literally that he had a demon.** Now you could understand how they would think that. **He was very unusual. He was saying unusual things.**

And here is an example of how unusual he was. **He was living in a world where blood was a lot thicker than water.** Blood was thicker than anything. And here he is more or less **pushing away his blood relatives** saying, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it.” Do you have any idea how arresting that is, especially within the culture of the ancient Middle East, the culture of blood relationships that assured that the death of one man

would be avenged by the death of another related to the offender and so on? So **this is really saying something very new**, that Jesus is talking about **a new kind of family, a new kind of relationship, and it is of course what became the family of the Church**. And it is meant to be a family; it is meant to be relationships of brother and sister to Christ, to Jesus, who is God. **So it is the family of God**. And it is a far greater value and importance than the human family. So even though we are pro-family and we want to promote families, all within their proper place. **The most important family is the family God**, and those who belong to it “are those who hear the word of God and act on it.