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“Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35).

2 Sam 6:12b-15, 17-19; Mark 3:31-35

Today’s readings give us a vivid sense of what real community looks and feels like. When the ark was brought to Jerusalem, the joyful crowds swell around a dancing

David to celebrate with shouts of joy and a feast of bread, roast meat and raisin cakes. They were gathering around a symbol they believed was assurance that God was with them and would protect the city because the ark now resided in their midst. In the Gospel, a similar scene takes place as the crowds press in on the house where Jesus was staying, hoping to see and touch him because his preaching and miracles had electrified their hopes that God's promise of a savior was being fulfilled in him.

Mass gatherings for important sporting events, political rallies, or even protest gatherings, can generate the same sense of solidarity and common purpose. As the group grows in size and its chants and songs grow in volume and intensity, people are lifted out of their individuality into a shared identity that is both thrilling and troubling, depending on how its enthusiasm is directed and shaped by organizers or spontaneous events.

Jesus had to contend with crowds during his public ministry, and he struggled to convey an identity and a sense of commitment around his core message of conversion, even among his own disciples. They were easily caught up in the surge of attention and popular enthusiasm that made them feel important as his lieutenants. He had to take them aside often and correct their misconceptions about his mission and what to expect as they set a course for Jerusalem.

Today's Gospel describes a difficult moment for the family of Jesus. They came seeking his attention and, in the culture of the times, they had a special claim on him that even the crowd recognized as a path was cleared for his own mother. Jesus' response at first seems like a rebuff, but it can also be interpreted as an intimate upgrade for every disciple. Because of their commitment to the will of God, they were as close to Jesus as his mother, brothers and sisters. To share Jesus' mission is to be his own flesh and blood.

We often think and say we want to do God's will in a general and abstract way, but Jesus says it must define our entire lives. It must be the center of our consciousness and the focus of our prayer. It must be the organizing principle of our daily activity, the guide underlying all our choices. To know God's will means sorting out all the influences and seductions, demands and desires that shape our habits and preferences, including how we spend our leisure, use our time, money and energy.

"Put on the mind of Christ," Paul writes. "Follow me," Jesus says. Then we will know we are part of the family, and the world will know this, too, for we will clearly bear

the family resemblance.

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