

14B SML 2021
MK 6:1-16

One falsehood and inaccuracy held by many non-Catholics is that Mary and Joseph had other children besides Jesus. Those who do not believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary use several verses from sacred scripture to support this falsehood:

1. Matthew 12:46: "While Jesus was still speaking, his mother and his **brothers** appeared outside wishing to speak with him."
2. John 7:5: "For Jesus' **brothers** did not believe in him."
3. Acts 1:14: "All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his **brothers**."
4. and in today's gospel, Mark 6:3: "Is Jesus not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the **brother** of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his **sisters** here with us?"

To address these verses, first, it is important **not** to read the scriptures as if they were written in 2021, but rather to read them as the period works they were, and in the ancient language they were written. Neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ and his disciples, had a special word for "cousin." Those who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic used either the word "brother" for "cousin" or the exact phrase, "the

son of the sister of my father" or whatever phrase was necessary to define the cousin. As you can imagine, using the exact phrase was clumsy, so people naturally fell to using the word "brother." Hence the scriptures were translated from Aramaic to Greek, from Greek to Latin, and from the Latin to the vernacular (or the modern language of English, French, Italian, Spanish, etc.) as "brother" and not "the son of the brother of my mother," or whatever the case may have been.

In a previous homily, I defended the perpetual virginity of Mary by addressing the following:

- ✓ Matthew 1:25 reads: "He (Joseph) had no relations with her (Mary) **until** she bore a son, and he named him Jesus." The word for "until," used at that time did not imply that Joseph had relations with Mary after she bore a son.
- ✓ The term "first born" does not imply there would necessarily be a second or third born"
- ✓ Some say it would be unthinkable for Mary and Joseph to enter marriage and remain virgins. Actually, what would have been unthinkable for Mary and Joseph would be to have normal marital relations, because having normal marital relations, under Mosaic law, made the wife "unclean until sundown." It would have been unthinkable for Joseph to make the Mother of God, which he knew she was, unclean, by having normal marital relations with her.
- ✓ If there were other siblings of Jesus, then why are they not mentioned at the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

at age twelve? There is no other hint that there are other children in the family.

- ✓ Finally, At the foot of the cross, Jesus said to the Beloved Disciple, John, "Behold thy Mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home." (John 19:27) Why would Jesus make provisions for His Mother with John if Jesus had six brothers and sisters?

To these arguments based on scripture, I would like to present a last argument that is implied in scripture, namely in the account of the Annunciation found in the Gospel of Luke, an argument that is widely held by orthodox Catholic theologians today.

A woman can be a virgin in one of three ways:

1. first because she never had the chance to marry,
2. second because she decided not to marry,
3. or third, a woman can be a virgin because she made a vow or a promise to God to keep herself pure for His sake, despite the fact that she may have had many chances to marry.

Mary was a virgin in the third way. She fell in love at a very early age and she fell in love with God – one of those beautiful loves where the first love is the last love, and the last love is Eternal Love.

Mary must have been very wise, as well as good, as a girl in her early teen years, to have made such a choice. And to

those women who were anxious to bear children, this alone made Mary very different. To some, especially the material minded, Mary was different in an odd sort of way, because they cannot understand why some souls would really love God that much.

We know Mary took such a vow from her exchange with the Angel Gabriel. There are a number of reasons why the appearance of the Angel would trouble Our Blessed Lady:

Why should the angel of God come to me?

Nothing troubles a humble soul like praise, and here the praise came from an angel of God. But more so, this great honor created a problem for Mary, who vowed to give her body as well as her soul to God. As she put it, "I know not man," or "I have willed not to know man." So Mary's only concern was, "How will God arrange it? God can do it, but how?"

When the Angel told Mary that her conceiving Our Blessed Lord would be of the Holy Spirit, Mary knew at once that this allowed her to keep her vow. Of course, all Mary wanted was to love God, and if it was God's will that she not keep her vow, so be it. But that was not the case.

And so Mary gave her "Fiat," "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." as God's handmaid. For any woman,

not to be God's handmaid lowers her dignity. A woman's unhappiest moments are when she is unable to give; a woman's most hellish moments are when she refuses to give.

The questions posed in this evening's (morning's) gospel - "Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? - could be restated rather simply. "Isn't Jesus just like us?" or "Isn't his mother just like us?" And the answer is a resounding "no."

If Our Blessed Lord and Our Blessed Lady, were just like us, then what would there be to emulate? What would there be to achieve?

- ✓ The mindset that "I'm OK, you're OK,"
 - ✓ the theology that zeroes in on Jesus as our brother,
 - ✓ Jesus as our friend,
 - ✓ to the neglect that Jesus is perfectly God and perfectly man;
 - ✓ the theology that zeroes in on the Blessed Mother as no different than any other mother,
 - ✓ to the neglect that she is the sinless Mother, ever virgin,
- runs the danger of setting the bar of emulation so low that, not only is it attainable, but we stub our toe on it. It sets the bar so low that our familiarity with Our Blessed Lord cheapens proper

worship to God, and cheapens the highest honor to Mary. And instead of being reverent before Almighty God and respectful before Our Blessed Mother, we get sloppy. And that's a divine injustice to God, and a perfectly human injustice to Mary.