

Item #85 (A Break with the Law)

Matthew 10,34-39 reads (Jesus is speaking): “Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to make a man turn against his father, and a daughter turn against her mother, and a daughter-in-law turn against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than he loves me is not worthy of me, and he who loves son or daughter more than he loves me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Luke 12,49-52 is a parallel, also in the words of Jesus: “I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled. I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am until it is carried out. Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I say to you, but division. For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

I suggest that the key to understanding these texts are to be found in *Matthew 12,46-50* and parallels (*Mark 3:31-35* and *Luke 8,19-21*). In these texts Jesus ties his relationship to His mother and other relatives to His heavenly Father’s will. He is obviously not saying that Matthew is incorrect in referring to persons who can be legitimately referred to as His mother and relatives. But he is saying that there is a different primary formality under which one becomes the mother and relatives of Jesus and it is a formality willed by the Father, from Whom all legitimacy comes. Jesus here must be referring to the New Covenant that replaces the Old Covenant, and with this radical change in covenants comes a change from 12 tribes to 12 apostles under the leadership of Peter, that is, the Church. This change is brought about by Jesus Himself, who refers to it as “baptism” in *Luke 12,49*, that is a radical change of identity. He is no longer primarily of the House of David but primarily the Spouse of the Church, His Mystical Body. **(James Swetnam, S.J., December 30, 2021)**