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23 TUESDAYTuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of YearHebrews 10: 1-10  
Ps 39: 2,4,7-8,10-11  
Mark 3: 31-35

There are some groups of people who always refer to each other as 'brother' or 'sister'. They are not necessarily religious groups (trade unions, for example, have traditionally done so), but they recognise a common interest that links members closely together both in their reflection and their communal activity. It is, too, a particularly Christian thing to call each other 'brother' or 'sister', especially when we pray and worship together, if not always in ordinary conversation. Those words are found often in the New Testament books, and perhaps most famously in the lines of St Mark's gospel we listen to today. Calling each other 'brother' or 'sister' may perhaps sometimes sound rather artificial. Perhaps also those people who told Jesus that His mother and relatives were waiting outside for Him may have felt His reply rather strange, artificial, or even dismissive. But the strong statement Jesus was making was about the word of God; that the word of God, listened to and accepted is a power and a bond greater than any other link or force between human beings. His own mother's greatness and relationship to Him, He was saying, isn't in the physical maternal bond of His human birth but in her reception of God's word, her welcome and acceptance of it. In Christ we are related to each other, in the word, much more deeply than in our flesh-and-blood family relationships. Accepting God's word unites us together in a way beyond normal perceptions or imaging. Cardinal Martini has called it the only foundation for true international relationships, such is the power of God's word in us. Let us then more warmly and deeply greet each other as 'brother' or 'sister'.

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