*** Franciscan-Clarian Spirituality Committee***

 ***The Seven Last Words of Jesus on the Cross***

***“Woman Behold you son. After that, He said to the disciple:***

***Behold your Mother.” (Jn. 19:26-27)***

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Franciscan Sisters of Allegany

As they stood vigil at the foot of the cross, Mary, the Mother of Jesus and John, the Beloved Disciple, heard Jesus address to them these words: *“Woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother”* (Jn 19: 26 – 27). Jesus was giving them into the care of each other, forming a new community, bestowing on them the gift of belonging. The Gospel goes on to say: “*From that hour onward, the disciple took her into his care”* (Jn. 19: 28). It is very likely that the caring was completely mutual as John became the son of Mary and Mary was given to him as mother. Being at home with one another does not depend so much on biological relationship as it does on extending loving care to all people, especially those we find most difficult to welcome.

This message invites us to recognize Mary today in the way that Francis of Assisi did, as mother of the whole body of Christ; the community of humankind. In his “Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary”, Francis says that Mary is *“…virgin made church…Hail His Palace! Hail His Tabernacle!* *Hail, His Home!”* He recognized that as Mary is the Mother of the eternal Christ, we too are called to become “mother” of the Christ in our own time when he says: *“We are mothers when we carry (Christ) in our heart and body* *through divine love …and give birth to Him…”* (Francis’ First Letter to the Faithful).

As we reflect on the call to become mother and brother and sister to the whole human family, we might respond by welcoming all into the home of our heart, inviting them to belong to our circle of love. We reach out to those in need by forming relationships of hospitality and caring. During this Lenten Season, what might you do to welcome others lovingly into the home of your heart?

**PRAYER**

Loving and good God, help me to open my heart to all people that they may find a place of love and compassion within me. Amen.