

Rev. Derek Fairman

6th Sunday of Easter B

Some of the blessings that we must count in this life are our friends. Friends are there when we need them to be. Friends give us the opportunity to share what happens in our lives. Friends are supportive and a good fit for us. Sometimes we like having lots of friends and sometimes it is better to have a very good one. God sends friends into our lives and we should be thankful to them for being there, but also thankful that God sends them to us.

When we think about friendship, there are many good things written about friendship and many good things that we can call to mind. These however pale in comparison to what our Lord tells us about friendship. There are two important things that the Lord points to concerning the meaning and purpose of friendship. The Lord not only taught what friendship means, but He actually demonstrated it Himself.

The Lord tells us that there is no greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends. The Lord is referring first and foremost to His death and the sacrifice He would make upon Calvary. The Lord made many more sacrifices before that, and even His coming down from Heaven to be among us was something that He did for our sake.

For the Apostles, too, they made a tremendous sacrifice in following Him. They have given up a life in which they could have had a steady income and had lots of things. They could have spent as much time with their family as they wanted. They sacrificed all of that in favor of following their Lord. They sacrificed for their friend, and later they would give their lives in witnessing to the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus invites us to give up our lives for our friends too. Does that mean dying for someone? Yes, if the situation demands it. We might remember the example of St. Maximilian Kolbe. However, even if we do not face that situation, there are other ways in which we must sacrifice for our friends. There is a time commitment; there is also a commitment to be there for our friends when they need us, even if it is inconvenient.

Friendship also means that we have to stop doing things that might hurt our friends. We must be supportive even when our friends make mistakes. True friendship is more than just getting along or having common interests. True friendship means leaving behind the idea of looking out for oneself first. It means sticking with our friends even if that means we are going to lose something or when everyone else walks away from them.

The other aspect of friendship that the Lord teaches us comes from His statement that He no longer calls us slaves but that He calls us friends. He does not call us slaves, because a slave does not know what His master is doing. He calls us friends, because He has shared with us everything that He has heard from His Father. Think about that. The Lord Jesus does not hold anything back, but He shares with us all that the Father has told Him. The Lord Jesus shares His own life with us too.

With our friends, we enter a level of comfort in which we feel we can reveal anything and be accepted. We share many thoughts and feelings with our friends, and our friends see us as we truly are, and not like anyone else see us. The Lord Jesus has given us an insight into Himself. The Lord Jesus has revealed what the inner life of the Trinity is like. The Lord Jesus left nothing back when He spoke to His apostles, and He leaves nothing back from us.

The Lord tells us that we are His friends if we do what He commands. He is our Lord and yet if we follow Him, He will reveal Himself to us and be our friends. He is the One who chooses us; we do not choose Him. We might think that our being here this day is something that we chose. We might think that all of the time that we have spent in prayer was our idea or our own initiative. All things start, however, with the Lord Himself. The reality is that the Lord has been there from the beginning, leading us to Himself. The Lord calls us to be His friends.

Friendship is more than just being in the same space at the same time. It means a true sharing, a true revealing to each other. Married couples are meant to be a great example for this. Married life means sharing one life together. It means that all aspects of life, including the decisions great and small, must be intertwined together. It means that married couples are willing to forego things that they might selfishly want and think of each other and their children. Married couples must sacrifice for each other and for the children.

The Lord wants us to be His friends. What does it mean to be the Lord's friend? One thing that it means is that we take time for prayer. He has offered His friendship to us, and friendship means taking time to pray, to share our lives with the Lord Jesus when we speak to Him. Prayer also helps us to think about what the Lord wants us to do. Friendship with the Lord also means sacrifices. How will you respond? Will you accept His invitation or not?