

YOU ARE MY FRIENDS (JOHN 15:9-17)

MAY 2, 2018 BY FR. BARTUNEK

“He had no need of us in order to save us, but we can do nothing without him... So let us love one another as Christ loved us and gave himself for us.” – St. Augustine

John 15:9-17: ‘As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete. This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master’s business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. What I command you is to love one another.’

Christ the Lord The moment is solemn. Jesus is at table with his intimate collaborators, his handpicked Twelve Apostles, and he knows that this is the last time they will be gathered in this way until they meet again in eternity. Nothing is carelessly said. Everyone on their deathbed has their final words, what they want to leave as their legacy. Jesus explains that he has loved us, and that he longs for us to remain in his love, to stay in his friendship, so that we may experience the indescribable joy that flows from true love. And then he lays down his one commandment, the new commandment, the summary of all his teaching and of his entire life: “Love one another as I love you.” The law of Christ, the law of Christ’s Kingdom, the only eternal law, is the law of love. Christ is Lord, because he commands with authority. But he is Lord of love, in love, and because of love, and his “command” is a heartfelt invitation to follow his example.

We can think of this part of his discourse as his battle plan – indeed, he is on the verge of heading into battle, his final battle against evil and all the forces of darkness. And with the consummating sacrifice of his life he will give birth to his Church militant, the body of believers who will take that same battle to the ends of the earth and the far corners of human history and culture. The plan is simple and straightforward. It is all summed up in his single, final, definitive command: love one another as I have loved you. To fight for the Lord and his Kingdom is to fight to fulfill that command.



Christ the Teacher Jesus, God himself, teaches us the nature of love. Love is self-giving: the greater the self-giving, the greater the love. “A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.” When we put our lives at the service of others, when we live in order to give and not to take, when we are willing to suffer so that someone else can rejoice, then we may call ourselves his disciples.

Just to make sure we don't misunderstand this lesson, he illustrated it by his own suffering and death. He accepted mockery, humiliation, torture, rejection, injustice, misunderstanding, betrayal, and finally death, not because he was too weak to resist, but to show us what love really is: self-giving, self-forgetting generosity. Jesus Christ hanging on the cross, bearing the weight of our sins and the punishment these sins have earned, thinking not of himself but of the souls he came to save, even pleading for their forgiveness up until the very end – this is love. Far from warm fuzzies and dreamy emotions, the love of Christ – and therefore the love of the Christian – is a love that gives without ever counting the cost, a love that gives without ever asking for something in return, a love that gives and gives and gives, just like God. And the more it gives, the more it has;

the more it loves, the better it loves. We learn to love by loving. When we learn this lesson of true love and self-giving, we tap into the inexhaustible source of energy and enthusiasm that is God himself.

Christ the Friend *Mary: My child, Jesus has now told you the most important thing that is in his heart. He has looked into your eyes, he has chosen you, and he has revealed his soul to you. He has held nothing back. You know him. He has come to offer you his friendship. If you reciprocate, if you also bare your heart to him in prayer, heed his call to follow him, and fulfill his commands, then your life will bear "fruit that will last" and your "joy will be complete." It is his promise, and he keeps his promises. Following Jesus Christ is a matter of the heart, a personal response to a personal invitation. And since the heart is the core of your being, anything that touches your heart touches every aspect of your life. Jesus wants to abide in your heart so that his friendship can color every nook and cranny of your life. Let him in again, today, right now.*

Christ in My Life Lord Jesus, you have wished to be my friend. I have so many friends. Friendship seems so simple, so natural. Do you really want to live like that with me? Don't you want something more dramatic, more impressive, more historic? After all, you are the King of the universe. But no, you just want my friendship. And I want yours. It is all I want. Increase my faith, Lord, and teach me to walk always by your side...

You keep repeating the same lesson, Lord, that you want me to love as you have loved. Why do you keep insisting? Because I still haven't learned it. It's like when I was a kid and my coaches and teachers kept drilling the fundamentals. How many times I had to write out the alphabet! How many times I had to shoot a layup! The fundamentals of eternal life – help me get them right, so I can help others...

I am so grateful that you have made me your soldier. You didn't need me; you could have conquered without me. But you chose to include me, to make me your ambassador, to give me a mission, a responsibility, a field of action. Now I can show you that I love you, that I am thankful for the innumerable gifts you have given me. I can show it by giving myself wholly to the mission you have entrusted to me...