

20. May 2022

Friendship with Jesus

Jn 15:12-17

At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: "this is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the 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; so that the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. My command to you is to love one another."

Disciples are called to enter into a friendship with the Lord, which goes beyond a relationship of disciple to teacher. Friendship means to know the heart of the other and also to entrust oneself fully to him. If this is already a wonderful love on the human level, how much more so is friendship with Jesus himself!

In human friendships we can experience disappointments because of our weaknesses, but not so in friendship with Jesus. He is not subject to change and does not fluctuate. The only way to lose his friendship is if you break it yourself.

Friendship with Jesus encompasses particular aspects. As we have heard in the Gospel, it is related in a special way to the fulfilment of the mission entrusted to him: *"You are my friends, if you do what I command you."*

Jesus then makes his friends participants in his mission, which represents the most important thing for him: to fulfil the Will of the Father. Love for the Will of the Father burns in Jesus' heart: to fulfil it is his nourishment (cf. Jn 4:34). In the most difficult hour of his earthly life - the agony in Gethsemane - when he was overcome with anguish before death, he remained firm in his decision to fulfil the Will of the Father: *"let it be as you, not I, would have it"* (Mt 26:39).

True friendship with Jesus, then, means entering into his great love for the Father; a love which he transmits to his friends and which is intimately related to the work of salvation.

There is another particular aspect to consider in friendship with Jesus: While we men usually make friends with the people we meet on our way, the Lord consciously chooses his own: *"You did not choose me, no, I chose you"*.

This makes it clear to us that it is Jesus who takes the initiative and we, by entering into a friendship with Him and following Him, reciprocate His choice. This can give us even greater security in our friendship with Him, knowing that it was divine Providence that arranged it.

Can there be a deeper friendship than that which flows from the heart of God? Can there be a deeper invitation than that of being inserted with Jesus into the Heart of God? Therefore, nothing must come before friendship with Jesus.

"This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you".

Friendship with Jesus, which is a special expression of love, must also extend to his disciples. Thus, mutual love is founded on the common friendship we have with Jesus and in Jesus. We are friends of God, and this enables us to model our human relationships on the love of Christ!

We hear the Lord tell us that we are to love one another with the same love that He has for us. It is even a commandment, an instruction from Jesus. But how can we concretely put it into practice, when we are again and again confronted with the limitations of our poor capacity to love?

In the first instance, we must be aware that in order to fulfil this commandment of the Lord, we need a supernatural love, a love that comes from God. In the love that Jesus has for us, all aspects of love - both human and spiritual - are fully contained. That is why we can turn to Him for this love. The quality of our love will increase as we deepen our relationship with the Lord.

Our growing union with God on the path of following Christ brings such a love to maturity and allows our love for our brother to become natural to us. It will be constantly renewed by the love that comes to us from God through his Word, the sacraments and the action of the Holy Spirit within us.

If we live in such a union and sincerely strive to put into practice the Lord's commandment to love one another, then we will easily understand this word of Jesus: *"the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name"*.

Indeed, if we have this deep union with God, we will ask for what is right and He will be able to give us all that He has in store for us.