

Dear St. Columbkille Family,

I have noticed how our relationships and friendships have been affected by the pandemic, first getting in confinement, then by social distancing and even lack of communication. What about to meditate about friendship?

The Lord invites us to friendship with him and with our brothers and sisters in Christ, which means, in all that Jesus has taught us, and not on pre-selected teachings. Jesus speaks to us both in the singular and in the plural. Sometimes, we need to be singled out like St. Peter was: "If it is my will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" (Jn 21:22). At other times, we have a deep need to know that he has called us to communion both with himself and with our fellow Christians.

Before ascending into Heaven Jesus boldly proclaimed, "I am with you always." God did not want to leave us alone on earth, but to call us to a deeper friendship, to walk side-by-side with us forever. This is the type of relationship that Jesus desires, as he explained to his apostles before his crucifixion.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. (John 15:15)

One of the most visible signs of this call to a deeper love is the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is the realization of Jesus' promise to be with us "always". Physical Eucharist, we look forward to receive every Sunday and spiritual Eucharist we practiced during confinement, still today in some states and for some nursing home residents.

By accepting his friendship and walking (living) with Jesus we begin the process of learning the cares of Jesus' heart and making them our own. We see the world with his eyes, recognizing the many challenges facing humanity and offering ourselves to him each day, pledging that we will do our part to help relieve the plight of our brothers and sisters. To talk about friendship with God is something new or never considered before for some; God, according to them, as authoritarian figure, needs respect, obedience and distance from us. They think to know "God" but not about Jesus. What kind of Christianity they teach if they don't use Jesus's teachings about ABBA, the Father? How can some, introduced as Christian will use God in opposition to Jesus teachings? For them, God can never be a friend and as consequence, friendship among us would be very difficult to establish.

Just as St. John placed his head on Jesus' heart, so we too must do the same and listen to what Jesus has to say and where his heart is broken. By doing so we can look to our country with his eyes and recognize what our role is in relieving the great suffering in today's society, specially between each other, as many times has happened in the past and in current social and political national conflicts.

John 15:12-15 is the key passage in John for a theology of friendship. Jesus enacts friendship throughout the Gospel, but these verses provide the words to describe and

name who and what Jesus is as friend. In John, Jesus is both the model and the source of friendship. As the model of friendship, he calls the disciples to love as he has loved. As the source of friendship, he makes possible their own friendship through what he has given them. For Jesus, his own act of life-giving friendship is not the end of the story. Jesus does not merely talk about friendship he lives out his life and death as a friend and he commands that his followers do the same (John 15:12-14). The commandment to love as Jesus has loved may be the most radical words of the Gospel because they claim that the love that enabled Jesus to lay down his life for his friends is not unique to him. This love can be replicated and embodied over and over again by his followers. To keep Jesus' commandment is to enact his love in our own lives. Jesus affirms the significance of this commandment by stating that his followers become his friends to the extent that they keep his commandment. Jesus' words here invite us to reexamine the sometime casual way we refer to Jesus as our friend with hope we can extend this basic Christian belief to those have not received yet this Good News.

It is imperative that we all who practice our Catholic Faith may stand up against division, violence, manipulation of conscience, crimes and abuses of any kind among us. It is a shame how we continue using the name of God in vain imploring protection, health and blessings when some do not admit our moral responsibility to wish the same to others. It is disgusting to hear from Christian mouths how ideological position are more important than our Christian values. We must do something immediately to revive our true Christian principles and Jesus teaching about Friendship. Our society is desperately in need of healing, reconciliation and friendship respecting our natural differences.

Let us pray that we may walk with Jesus in friendship, seeing our nation as he sees it and doing what we can in prayer and in deed to make our country a better place. There are many challenges facing America, but by uniting our heart to Jesus' heart, we can understand the true path to peace and joy, reconciliation and respect.

Let us pray, pray, pray and do the best we can make real our relationship with Jesus.

Some news from Parish life:

Our Parish Office is open to the public from Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 1:30pm. The church is also open from Monday to Friday from 7:00am to 12noon for personal prayer and adoration.

The weekend Masses remain: Saturdays 3:00pm and 5:00pm and Sundays 9:00am, 11:00am and 5:30pm.

We continue giving **Communion under the Portico on Sunday from 12noon to 12:30pm** for those who watch the mass on TV (Our diocesan Mass is on Sunday 10:30am on local Fox 4) There is no need to exit your car in the driveway of the Church.

Dispensation from obligation to attend Sunday Mass in the Diocese of Venice in Florida is until September 1st, 2020.

On Saturdays, we offer a **Communal Rosary and Mariam Novena** beginning at 8:00am and the **Sacrament of Reconciliation under the Portico** (Driveway without exiting your car) from 8:30am to 9:30am.

Feast of the Assumption, Saturday, August 15th there will be a service dedicated to the Blessed Mother at 8:00am.

Gospel Forum for Women starting Tuesday, August 4 at 9:00am at the Grotto (outside) please, bring your chair and Bible.

Men fellowship Group is meeting online using Zoom on Mondays at 7:00pm. More Information call Ken Navarre at 810-459-4662.

St Paul School of Evangelization will start classes in September. These classes will be online during pandemic. If you are interested to join this institute please call Dr. Sue Ellen Nolan at 239-222-7653.

When you come to church you must remember to bring your face mask and keep it on out of respect to others; practice social distancing when you find a seat and when you come up to receive Holy Communion; use hand sanitizer near to the door once you enter and when you leave the church. Families may stay together and if someone feels sick they should stay home. Your donations and offertory envelopes can be dropped off before or after mass in one of the two boxes located in front of the altar. Your financial support is very appreciated also by mail or electronically, please, contact Sergio Figueroa, the administrative coordinator if you need help.

You can always contact one of the clergy by (239) 634-2927 or me lgonzalez@stcolumbkille.com

May the Lord give us his strength to hold friendship.

Fr. Lorenzo