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“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you” (John 15:16).

*Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; John 15: 9-17*

As Jesus prepared to depart, he revealed the kind of relationship he would have with his disciples that would promise them an unbroken intimacy with him, even in his physical absence. He had called them to follow him during his ministry, and they had known him as Master and Teacher.

But nothing could have prepared them for the intimacy he would offer them as he passed from this life and was revealed by his resurrection to be their Lord and God. He opened their hearts to a mutuality only possible for equals by calling them friends. They had known his human companionship and love; now they shared his divine life and his own relationship with his Father.

The Final Discourses reveal the inner dynamic of Jesus’ union with his Father. “The Father and I are one.” Jesus had come into the world because the Father loved him and sent him to reveal this love as the radiating center of Reality and the Source of Creation and all Life. He now was sharing this inner life with his disciples. As the Father had loved him, so he loved them. As the Father had sent him, he was sending them. They were to witness his union with the Father by loving one another.

Jesus was pouring his identity into his disciples, for now they knew everything he had heard from his Father. Servants did not share their master’s plans or the inner life of the family, but they were no longer servants. The disciples were now intimate members of the household of God, drawn intimately into Jesus’ own relationship with his Father. They would not fully grasp this until the Holy Spirit entered them at Pentecost, but this was their new status and their witness to the world.

Human friendship is a glimpse into this mystery. Before friendship, we exist in self-awareness, but in isolation. Everyone around us is an “other,” separate from us, opaque in their own world of feelings and ideas. By communicating and sharing ourselves, we can begin to know another as self, like us, but only by freely entrusting ourselves to one another do we overcome our essential aloneness. This breakthrough is one of the most important experiences a human being can have, and the joy of inhabiting one another’s thoughts and feelings is a threshold to the even deeper breakthrough of spiritual union.

Friendship is how we become fully human. Jesus offers us friendship with God through his humanity united with his divinity. To be his friend is to be in the presence of God. What his disciples received we receive in baptism and in the gradual awareness of who we are. As we approach Pentecost, we are invited to pray for the Holy Spirit, who is the Love between Jesus and the Father. Our baptism in water is meant to lead us to another baptism of fire.

*Pope Francis has invited us to pray on May 14 for the end of the global pandemic and in support of healthcare workers. By praying together we witness the power of the body of Christ to touch and heal humanity.*

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