



May 9, 2021 John 15: 9-17 & Acts. 10: 44-48

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Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Measuring Ourselves in](#)

[Love Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[Love one another](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

Henri Nouwen puts it this way. “Friendship is one of the greatest gifts a human being can receive. It is a bond beyond common goals, common interests, or common histories. It is a bond stronger than sexual union can create, deeper than a shared fate can solidify, and even more intimate than the bonds of marriage or community. Friendship is being with the other in joy and sorrow, even when we cannot increase the joy or decrease the sorrow. It is a unity of souls that gives nobility and sincerity to love. Friendship makes all of life shine brightly. Blessed are those who lay down their lives for their friends.” We come to the reading from John in the time after Easter and before Pentecost. Try to imagine the disciples flashing back to that night when they first heard this. Can you see the “now I get it” looks on their faces?

John 15:9-17

9 As the **Father** has **loved** me, so have I **loved** you: continue in my **love**. 10 If you keep my **commandments**, you shall **abide** in my **love**; even as I have kept my **Father's commandments**, and **abide** in his **love**. 11 These things have I **spoken** unto you, that my **joy** might **remain** in you, and that your **joy** might be **full**. 12 This is my **commandment**, That you **love** one another, as I have **loved** you. 13 Greater **love** has no one than this that they **lay down** their **life** for their **friends**. 14 you are my **friends**, if you do whatever I **command** you. 15 Henceforth I call you not **servants**; for the **servant** knows not what his **lord** does: but I have called you **friends**; for all things that I have **heard** of my **Father** I have made **known** unto you. 16 You have not **chosen** me, but I have **chosen** you, and **ordained** you, that you should go and bring forth **fruit**, and that your **fruit** should **remain**: that whatsoever you shall ask of the **Father** in my **name**, he may give it you. 17 These things I **command** you that you **love** one another.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How does knowing you are a friend of Jesus help you to love even those who want you dead as he did?

PRAYER: Lover Jesus, you would say these words shortly before you died knowing full well I could not understand them until I stood on the truth of the Resurrection. When you greeted me with “Peace be with you” even after I ran from you that terrible day. Now I am beginning the glimpse what you meant when you said to love others as you love me. Please help me have the strength to keep on trying to love as you love. Amen

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

FATHER: The father of a family stood next in line with God in the power structure of Jesus' day. He had absolute authority to make decisions for himself and his family, conditioned only by the laws of God.

When Jesus calls God, Father, does this help you to connect with the creator or all that is? How? If not, why?

LOVE-ED: Love is what Jesus knew that God had for him. Love seems to be the energy that brings everything/everyone into being and holds them in being. Fear seems to be that which stops or destroys being.

Jesus is facing his death soon, and gives these last words to his disciples. How is he using the word, love, in this passage? How is Jesus' lack of fear enabling him to love? Face his upcoming death?

COMMAND / COMMANDMENTS: A commandment is an instruction given by someone in authority. There were 613 commandments by this time.

Does Jesus' understanding of love (Love God with your whole heart, mind, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself) make it easier or harder to live in faithfulness to his instruction? How? If not, why?

ABIDE / REMAIN: To abide or remain is to settle down / live in a place or a relationship.

What is Jesus promising in this passage? How has Jesus remained in God's love? How can you do the same?

JOY: Joy is a feeling of intense happiness.

What kind of intense happiness is Jesus talking about? What is it that he wishes for the disciples? How can he talk about joy at a timelike this?

FULL: To be full is to be complete. There is room for nothing more.

How do these words of Jesus fill you? Do they make you feel complete?

LAY DOWN: When someone lays down something, we think of many things. It could be a free choice or a forced situation.

How have you laid down your life for someone lately? Was it freely done? What values do you cherish that are worth more than physical life to you? What fears keep you un-free to make choices?

LIFE: To have life is to be able to experience and reflect on this experience

How has the study of the Word given you life? What experiences have been able to reveal the true meaning of life to you? How does Jesus use the word life?

FRIENDS: A friend is someone who we trust ourselves to. It is a form of mutual self-revelation. In calling the disciples friends, Jesus trusted himself to those around him that day.

Do you think the disciples understood the magnitude of this revelation? Were they able to follow through with their part of the friendship? Before the resurrection? After the resurrection?

SERVANT: A servant does what the master requests. It was a step above slave, but not much of a step. A servant does not need to understand, only obey. A friend obeys because they understand.

Are the disciples still servants in their minds and hearts? What does it take to move them into true friendship? What do you need to move into friendship with Jesus? Are you more comfortable being a servant? Why?

LORD: The word Lord in Jesus' day meant someone who was in charge of people or property. In other translations the word master is used here. The words servant and master belong together.

In calling the disciples friends, how does Jesus change the relationship he has with them? Are you ready to be called a friend of Jesus? Can Jesus be both Lord and friend at the same time? If so, how?

HEARD: To hear is to receive a communication from someone. Jesus says that he is giving all that he has heard from God to the disciples.

What have you heard so far in this passage from scripture? Do you feel that you are being given the same status of friend as those in the room that day?

KNOWN: The bible uses the word *know* in a very special way. It more closely resembles the words we use to describe the intimate relationship of a husband and wife. Jesus says he and God both know us in this very intimate way.

Is it a cause for joy for you to be known this intimately by God? Why? If not, why?

CHOSEN: To be chosen is to be given a special mission or role. It implies an ability to fill that mission or role.

Do you think the disciples felt up to that mission and role? Is it always a good thing to be chosen?

ORDAINED: To be ordained is to be commissioned for a special mission or role, by someone or a group of people on their behalf.

How has your baptism ordained you for a special mission or role? Who ordained you? What do they want you to do on their behalf?

FRUIT: Fruit is the fullness of a healthy tree or plant. It contains the seeds for its future as well as the nourishment for its growth. It also nourishes the one who eats it.

How and when do the disciples begin to bear fruit? How and when have you borne fruit in the sense that Jesus uses the word in this scripture?

NAME: Jesus asks God to glorify God's name. This sounds like a strange request at first glance. In revealing God's true nature in Jesus, God does glorify God's name. Humanity can now really experience God fully in Jesus.

What about this study today has helped you to see God more fully? Do you think that the way you ask for things from God is affected by this understanding? Does Jesus' in revealing himself totally to you enable you to more completely love one another?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Jn. 15:9 // Jn. 17:23; Jn. 15:10 // Jn. 8: 29; 14:15; Jn. 15:11 // Jn. 16:22; 17:13; Jn. 15:12 // Jn. 13:34; Jn. 15:13 // Rom. 5:6f; 1 Jn. 3:16; Jn. 15:15 // Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:7; Jn. 15: 16 // Jn. 14:13; Dt. 7:6; Jn. 15:17 // Jn. 13:34; 1 Jn. 3:23; 4:21;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Acts 10: 25-6, 4-5, 44-8; [Ps. 98: 1-4](#); 1 Jn. 4:7-10; Jn. 15:9-17;
Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 10:44-8; [Ps. 98](#); 1 Jn. 5:1-6; Jn. 15: 9-17;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

"There is almost a sensual longing for communion with others who have a large vision. The immense fulfillment of the friendship between those engaged in furthering the evolution of consciousness has a quality impossible to describe."

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Are we friends with ourselves? Do we love who we are? These are important questions because we cannot develop good friendships with others unless we have befriended ourselves. How then do we befriend ourselves? We have to start by acknowledging the truth of ourselves. We are beautiful but also limited, rich but also poor, generous but also worried about our security. Yet beyond all that we are people with souls, sparks of the divine. To acknowledge the truth of ourselves is to claim the sacredness of our being, without fully understanding it. Our deepest being escapes our own mental or emotional grasp. But when we trust that our souls are embraced by a loving God, we can befriend ourselves and reach out to others in loving relationships. Henri Nouwen

In a way, although Jesus unburdened the disciples of so much of the baggage the world considers essential, he did not relieve them of all burdens. He relieved them of false baggage so he could lay upon them even more demanding burdens. For in laying upon them the necessity to trust not their possessions but only him, Jesus showed them that here was a journey which...we have no clear idea of what our end will be except that it shall be, in some form, true and complete friendship with God.

Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon

It is no hard matter to adhere to God while you are in the enjoyment of His comforts and consolations; but if you would prove your fidelity to Him, you must be willing to follow Him through the paths of dryness and desertion. The truth of a friend is not known while he is receiving favors and benefits from us; but if he remain faithful to us when we treat him with coldness and neglect, it will be a proof of the sincerity of his commitment. - François Fénelon

With a friend we can be still and know that God is there with both of us. Henri Nouwen

And Peter also represents each of us, as we come to terms with the realization that God loves even those who we find disturbing, or whom we deeply dislike, often with excellent reasons. And in this discovery we also discover that love is an unsettling thing, stretching us beyond the zone of comfort that feels good, or makes us feel that we are good. Pg.108. Fr. Robert Beck

Friendship, in other words, is an interpersonal blank check, a promise of commitment with no strings attached and no holds barred. Friends are sometimes not easy to bear, because they won't go away, they won't let us revel in self-pity or self-hatred. They won't let us quit. They won't let us paralyze ourselves with remorse and guilt. Our friends will not desert us when we fail or do wrong, but they nonetheless demand the best of us, and they are never satisfied with less than best. Friends are a joyous burden; they chain us and bind us because they do not permit us to run away either from them or from that which is best in ourselves. Such is the nature of the friendship that Jesus commits himself to in the gospel today. He accepts the worst in us and demands the best; he stands by us when we are in trouble and challenges us when we are complacent. He will never let us go either at those times when we desperately need a friend nor at those times when we would dearly like to be free of the help of friends.

Greeley, Andrew. When Life Hurts. Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1988. Pages 70-71.

Both the Buddha and Jesus began renewal movements within their religious traditions, though neither saw himself as the founder of a new religion. There are also striking parallels in the religious traditions that grew up around them. Remarkable events were said to have surrounded the births of both Jesus and the Buddha. Both were described as having extraordinary powers. Both were seen as more than human even though their humanity continued to be affirmed. Both were given an exalted—even divine—status by their followers. Both were seen as incarnations: Jesus as the word and wisdom of God incarnate, Gautama—the historical Buddha—as the manifestation on earth of the heavenly Buddha. The exalted status assigned to them reflects the enormous impact these two figures had on their followers, both during their lifetimes and afterward. Borg, Marcus;, Riebert, Ray. East Meets West: The Uncanny Parallels in the Lives of Buddha and Jesus. Bible Review. 10,1999. Pg. 219ff.

For God never comes to us alone, but brings with him the whole universe. He opens our eyes to the beauty of everything that is. He brings with him every human being who has ever lived. He breaks our hearts open to what is *not self*. He shares with us his own joy and his own total, all-embracing love poured out on us in Christ (Jn. 15: 11-12). This is why the great Christian teacher and saint, Seraphin of Sarov, having spent thirty years alone in the silence of his cell, used to run out to meet every person coming toward him,

bow down to the ground, and say, "My brother, my sister, my joy!" This is why all true saints have always loved every creature which came from the hand of God. Love does not discriminate or categorize; it does not insist on being right. Love embraces all things in that great, empty silence beyond words or thought, which is the side-open door to ecstasy and to unending joy. Zaleski, Irma. *The Door to Joy*. Parabola, June 1998. Pages 49ff.

In the Mediterranean world, affection is not central to the concept of love. It may be present, but more often than not it isn't. The key element in the Mediterranean understanding of love is attachment and bonding, particularly to the group. Pilch, John J. *The Cultural World of Jesus-Cycle B*. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 1996. Page 82.

This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that they lay down their life for their friends. (Jn 15:12-13) Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so cultivate a boundless heart towards all being. Let your thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world. (Sutra Nipata 149-150)

One of the favorite ways of starting my day with a sense of awe is to go to the [NASA website](#) for the picture of the day. This helps me to keep in perspective the grandeur and wonder of God's continuing process of creation.

Suppose for a moment, that only love was real. Not the house you live in, or the job you work at, or the money you make, or the vacation you take, or the award you win. Suppose for a moment, that only love was real. What would you do then? Guillermo Nordarse Pg.109. *Thirty Three Days*

The day will come when after harnessing the ether, the winds, the tides, gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire. -from *The Evolution of Chastity*: Teilhard de Chardin

Hugo of St. Victor had an axiom, which said: "Love is the eye!" Only when we see through the prism of love do we see correctly. Admiration is part of that. When we don't admire, we aren't seeing straight, pure and simple. Fr. Ron Rolheiser

Thus the church is no agglomeration of atomistic members who decide to be together for reasons of self-interest....set apart from other human groupings. Rather, Christ choose our neighbors for us-including the uncongenial and quite unlike us, socially, ethnically, temperamentally – and connects us to them, his brothers and sisters and therefore ours, in an integrated fellowship which transcends both time and space and every boundary between races, classes, nationalities, and generations. Lewis, Alan E. *Between Cross and Resurrection*. Grand Rapids, MI. Eerdmans. 2001. Pg. 350.

Karl Rahner once explained it this way: Our love for each other does not just give us friendship and companionship here on earth, important though these are. It does something else too for us. It links us to love in such a way that when we stand before God and make our choice, a fundamental choice for all eternity, we stand there already connected in love to a community of grace and therefore much more prone to choose love and God.

A friend is that other person with whom we can share our solitude, our silence, and our prayer. A friend is that other person with whom we can look at a tree and say, "Isn't that beautiful," or sit on the beach and silently watch the sun disappear under the horizon. With a friend we don't have to say or do something special. With a friend we can be still and know that God is there with both of us. Henri Nouwen

Jn. 15: 9 The notion of dying for one's friends is also expressed in Aristotle's extensive comments on friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.1169a, which may underlie the Gospel's entire discussion on friendship and love in the farewell discourses chs 14–16). 16: I chose you, probably not an expression of predestination, but of Jesus' calling his followers (e.g., 1.43). 18–25: Pg. 187. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

A friend is more to be longed for than the light; I speak of a genuine one. And wonder not: for it were better for us that the sun should be extinguished, than that we should be deprived of friends; better to live in darkness, than to be without friends. - John Chrysostom

Don't wait for people to be friendly, show them how. ~Henry James

Friendship is born at that moment when one [person] says to another: "What! You too? I thought that no one but myself..." -C.S Lewis

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2015*. Pgs.74-76.. To order contact Carol.Oberfoell@loras.edu

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005*. Pgs. 86-89.

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2009*. Pgs. 105-108.

Beck, Robert. *Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2012*. Pgs. 75-77.

Bausch, William J. *Storytelling*. Twenty-Third Pub., Mystic, CT. 1984. **Word in the Flesh**: Pages 115-116.

White, William B. *Stories For the Telling*. Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. **Companions of the King**: 1986. Pages 128-9. Grana,

Janice. *Images*. St. Mary's College Press, Winona, MN. 1976. **Sorting Through**: Page 20.

Hays, Edward. *St. George and the Dragon*. Easton, KS. Forest of Peace Books. 1986. **Giant Skyhook**: Pages 137-140.