

**THE FRIENDSHIP WHICH GOD
SEEKS TO ESTABLISH WITH EACH
OF US**

**By
Metropolitan Archbishop Paul, S.S.B. (Ret.)**

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Most Rev. Lee S. Mc Colloster, S.S.B.

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Holy Innocents Orthodox Church / Retreat House

25401 Lorin Wall Road

Holden, Louisiana 70744

CONTENTS

PREFACE Ecclesiasticus Chapter 6 (6:1-17) (Of true and false friends) Page 6

PEACE, SIN, EMPTINESS, PREPARATION, RESPONSE, ALL IN FRIENDSHIP [Friendship 1] Page 9

THE INCARNATION MADE POSSIBLE A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD SIMPLY BECAUSE MAN COULD READILY PERCEIVE GOD [Friendship 2] Page 14

THE FRIENDSHIP WHICH GOD DESIRES WITH US [Friendship 3] Page 20

YOU CAN ALWAYS HAVE AT LEAST ONE FRIEND WHO IS WORTH HAVING [Friendship 4] Page 27

POSTSCRIPT WEDDING AND MARRIAGE Page 30

PREFACE

Ecclesiasticus Chapter 6 (6:1-17)

(Of true and false friends)

6:1. Instead of a friend become not an enemy to thy neighbour: for an evil man shall inherit reproach and shame, so shall every sinner that is envious and double tongued.

6:2. Extol not thyself in the thoughts of thy soul like a bull: lest thy strength be quashed by folly,

6:3. And it eat up thy leaves, and destroy thy fruit, and thou be left as a dry tree in the wilderness.

6:4. For a wicked soul shall destroy him that hath it, and maketh him to be a joy to his enemies, and shall lead him into the lot of the wicked.

6:5. A sweet word multiplieth friends, and appeaseth enemies, and a gracious tongue in a good man aboundeth.

6:6. Be in peace with many, but let one of a thousand be thy counsellor.

6:7. If thou wouldst get a friend, try him before thou takest him, and do not credit him easily.

6:8. For there is a friend for his own occasion, and he will not abide in the day of thy trouble.

6:9. And there is a friend that turneth to enmity; and there is a friend that will disclose hatred and strife and reproaches.

6:10. And there is a friend a companion at the table, and he will not abide in the day of distress.

6:11. A friend if he continue steadfast, shall be to thee as thyself, and shall act with confidence among them of thy household.

6:12. If he humble himself before thee, and hide himself from thy face, thou shalt have unanimous friendship for good.

6:13. Separate thyself from thy enemies, and take heed of thy friends.

6:14. A faithful friend is a strong defence: and he that hath found him, hath found a treasure.

6:15. Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity.

6:16. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality: and they that fear the Lord, shall find him.

6:17. He that feareth God, shall likewise have

good friendship: because according to him shall
his friend be.

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**PEACE, SIN, EMPTINESS,
PREPARATION, RESPONSE, ALL IN
FRIENDSHIP
[Friendship 1]**

Jesus has informed us of various events which will occur just prior to His second coming. Many, many people look for these events, wondering if events they observe, which seem to match what our Lord described, are the actual events, or simply similar events. These individuals comprehend only a portion of Our Lord's instructions, in that He is advising us to prepare and to be prepared not only for His second coming, but for the meeting we each will have with Him when our time in this life is completed.

In a similar manner we prepare for an event which has already occurred, His birth which we celebrate at Christmas, and the announcement to the Gentiles of the birth of the Messiah which we celebrate on the Feast of the Three Kings.

God provides us with signs and indications not only of coming events, but also of our personal status and that of our cultures, societies, and of the world.

One of the world wide conditions which is obvious is severe lack of peace. People with religious

inclinations will pray for peace; others will attempt to impose their concept of peace upon others - but those who would impose peace do not have a real concept of peace and therefore act in evil.

We individually and collectively should pray for peace, and do what we are able to do to promote peace. Some will pray for peace in a or several specific situations, others for peace in general.

Peace is not found in the imposition of the will of one human or of an association of humans. Nor does it originate therein.

Peace originates from and in God, the true God, not a close approximation of God. Peace originates in and from the Trinity God, the God who established the Sacraments and not only desires they be used and accessed by all humans, but actually requires they be used and accessed by all humans.

Holiness is required for peace; goodness and being good is not sufficient. Remember the instruction from Proverbs (16:7) which states, “When the ways of man shall please the Lord, he will convert even his enemies to peace.”

Pray for peace knowing that for which you are praying, the prerequisites therefore, seeking personal holiness in prayer and in regular accessing of all the Sacraments available and open to you in accordance with your state in life.

Be prepared for opposition from Satan, who promotes chaos, destruction, death, maiming, harm of all types and of every nature, and who abhors peace.

If you are prepared for this opposition, you will more easily be enabled to persist in pursuit of your own personal holiness, with increased prospects of attaining holiness, and maintaining a state of holiness. You will also be prepared to persist in praying for and in seeking peace, even unto attaining peace in some measure for yourself and for others.

Never, ever, mistake peace for lack of conflict, or worse, for lack of ongoing conflict. Peace in Heaven emanates from God, is full, complete, and permanent. Peace anywhere else is very temporary and is incomplete.

Outside of Heaven, peace is attained by war against evil; by being prepared for war against evil; by training for war against evil; by being able to discern evil from other human conditions which, while they may be undesirable, are not evil, and may be mere incompetence, foolishness, or stupidity. This should remind us that, just as being good is not the same as being holy, although it may be an indication of holiness, so also is being sinful not an indication of being evil though it may be an indication of evil.

Sin leaves a person empty in measure with the person's immersion in sin. Sin also leaves a person alone in measure with the evil a person has embraced. Therefore, even though evil and sinful people may associate with each other, each is a lonely island of evil and sin.

But those who engage in holy goodness in any measure experience Divine Peace in like measure. This is in accordance with God's desires. Another of God's desires is astounding. It is God's desire to establish friendship with each of us and all of us.

We know God the Son became Incarnate with full and complete human nature and full and complete divine nature, expressly for the purpose repairing the rift between God and humankind. We know a part of this was for God the Son, Jesus Christ, being the Supreme Sacrificial Victim and demonstrating His victory in His Resurrection.

We also are taught to be good and faithful servants of God through many of the parables through which Our Lord has taught us, and in recognition of His supremacy as the Risen Lord.

But God's desire we become His friends often receives only passing attention.

Jesus always communicates with us and talks with us in the manner of a friend. Supreme ruler though He is, He would be our friend, desires we also wish to be His friend.

The Divine - Human friendship which God desires is each human and all humans with God, and each human and all humans with each Person of The Blessed Trinity.

Because of the hypostatic union, which is a term used to describe the union of Christ's humanity and divinity in one hypostasis, or individual existence, humans are readily able to reciprocate with Jesus, the offer of friendship which God makes to us.

Jesus therefore is the most often and the most easily accessed Person of The Blessed Trinity for many if not most Human beings.

The friendship which Jesus desires is not the ordinary friendship of men engaged in watching or participating in sports or other activities, nor of women engaging in that which is common to women, nor of those friendship activities common to men and women.

It is a friendship which includes these and more. It is the friendship of warriors. It is especially the friendship of those warriors who have engaged in battle, suffered injuries, suffered losses, rallied, and won. Remember this for it is of utmost importance.

Ref: Rom. 13: 11-14, Luke 21: 25-34, Proverbs 16:7

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**THE INCARNATION MADE
POSSIBLE A NEW RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD SIMPLY BECAUSE MAN
COULD READILY PERCEIVE GOD
[Friendship 2]**

Before the Incarnation of Christ, the human and Divine relationship was limited. It was limited not because God was limited in His ability to relate to humans - He is not - but because of the limited ability of humans to relate to God.

Before the Incarnation there probably were many humans who had relationships with God. But most people struggled in maintaining that relationship, and relied on following God's instructions as best they could as the means by which they maintained if not a real ongoing relationship, at least a form of harmony with God. The exceptions were so few and so exceptional that we are easily able to name many of them: Adam, Eve, Abel, and a few of their other children; Noah and his children; Abraham and Isaac; Jacob and his twelve sons, though all of the sons did not consistently seek harmony with God or each other; Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons, and Joshua, who in many ways was more of a son to Moses than were his own sons; Elias, and Elijah. Of these Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, especially Moses, established relationships which did not merely seek harmony

with God but which were friendships with God.

The Divine operation which resulted in the Word Made Flesh provided a human nature with which all humans could easily relate. Even though at that time most of mankind did not yet know that Jesus Christ is God, from the very inception of the hypostatic union, the union of Christ's humanity and divinity in one hypostasis, in one individual existence, from its very inception there was also created a medium in which all human relations, actions, and abilities, could be elevated so-as-to be able to at least touch on the divine.

This means that after the Incarnation and birth of Jesus, those humans who sought harmony with God, and who also established friendships with each other, experienced an element of the divine in those friendships. Even the lightest touch of the divine radically changes all of what it touches.

We observe this change when we compare the relationships between Old Testament Prophets and their disciples, with that of Saint John the Forerunner (the Baptist) and his disciples. Even though Saint John was the master, he and his disciples also had the relationship of friends, while the Old Testament Prophets usually were more firmly entrenched as masters.

When we examine the conversations and activities of Jesus, the divine authority of Our Lord is always obvious. But there is nothing haughty in

His manner. Rather, His manner is always that of a friend, and often of an older brother even though in human years He often was younger than those with whom He interacted.

Every human is familiar with master servant relationships, even though in modern times such relationships are often referred to as supervisor and staff, management and labor, officials and those over whom the officials have authority, and the like. Friendships develop more easily between and amongst those in similar positions: masters with masters and servants with servants. When friendships develop between master and servant, the friendships are tentative or at best somewhat uncertain, with the masters having as it were “an edge”.

The friendship which Jesus desires is not even remotely similar to that between master and servant, nor is it similar to that amongst masters. Nor is it similar to that amongst servants, for though Our Lord is the Supreme Servant, He also is the Supreme Master. What Jesus desires is not the ordinary friendship of men engaged in watching or participating in sports or other activities, nor of women engaging in that which is common to women, nor of those friendship activities common to men and women.

It is a friendship which includes these and more. It is the friendship of warriors. It is especially the friendship of those warriors who have engaged in

battle, suffered injuries, suffered losses, rallied, and won.

It is the friendship expressed by Shakespeare; in the speech by King Henry V, just before the Battle of St. Crispin's Day; the speech wherein he speaks of the coming battle to his army, saying, “. . . **But we in it shall be remember'd; We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; For he to-day that sheds his blood with me Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile, . . .**” (*Shakespeare Henry V, Scene III*)

Be a person strong or weak in prayer, staunch against sin or constantly falling into sin, provided he desires and strives to be in harmony with Our King and Lord Jesus Christ, and forsakes being a collaborator with the enemy, a quisling, or a traitor, even though he constantly be overcome by the enemy, and suffer countless wounds of the sins he or she has committed, yet will Jesus Christ stand over the warriors in His army, protect them from the mortal wounds of the evil enemy, and heal all of their wounds.

It is this friendship of brothers in arms with Our Lord seeks to have with every man, woman, and child.

The friendship of warriors who have engaged in heavy, fierce, battle; suffered wounds of light and heavy nature; friendship wherein there is easy acknowledgment and seemingly simultaneous

ignoring of difference in rank and position without embarrassment or disrespect. For the King has proven His mettle to His warriors, and the warriors have proven their loyalty, love, and mettle to their King.

In the Divine energies, though we are unable to comprehend how it is possible, this friendship is open to those who have just been conceived, the most aged, those of every infirmity, those of every strength, and everyone in between, for so long as they shall live in this world.

Those who participate in that friendship make no distinctions between themselves and any of the others who likewise participate: high born or low born, intelligent or barely to construct a comprehensible sentence, well dressed or vermin infested.

Those who accept that friendship in this world will join Our Lord in His heavenly kingdom, even though they were the least effective, the least brave, the least valiant, in the battles of this world.

For all will bear the scars of their sins, the shining brilliance of their healed wounds, seeing in their comrades the visage of warriors who have served The Lord.

Ref: Romans 15:4-13; Mat.. 11:2-10

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THE FRIENDSHIP WHICH GOD DESIRES WITH US [Friendship 3]

The friendship which God desires with each of us and with all of us is total and complete without reservation. In that friendship is a comfort such that each person is actually comfortable with each and every other person, be that person Divine or human.

To express this relationship we use the image from Shakespeare's Henry V, of warriors who are so close as to form a band of brothers. Each has experienced the others proving themselves in battle, and has survived battles because of the others. That was not the warfare of today, where command may never experience potential death or dismemberment, nor where those in the ordinance and supply structure often are insulated from most dangers. This is not to diminish those in such positions in modern warfare, but in the time of King Henry V, the baggage train was never far from the main body of warriors, and those in the baggage train often fought for their lives even though they were not in the front lines.

Every individual who seeks eternal salvation is a warrior battling not just against evil, but also battling to establish holiness, and to personally

become holy. We continually encounter that which would wound our souls. Often we suffer such wounds, but we also often are victorious in such encounters. When we are being beaten down our King and Lord Jesus Christ stands over us, protecting us as did King Henry V, when he protected his severely wounded brother, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, until his brother could be dragged to safety. That individual action was so severe and dangerous that the king received an axe blow to the head which knocked off a large portion of the crown that formed part of his helmet.

It is, however, of utmost importance to note that it is not the treatment of enemy military and civilians by King Henry which are being lauded. It is his fidelity to his brothers in arms which is being lauded.

It is an even greater fidelity which warriors for holiness and against evil receive from and experience from their King, and which the warriors attempt to emulate in protecting each other. Such fidelity is not gender limited, the fairer gender exhibiting that bond equally with the male.

This brotherhood, this warrior class, must exclude compromise for compromise by its nature introduces that which is not holy. If holiness is lessened, what is the result? Consider keeping the Lord's day holy by worshiping God. If one compromises on this, then the Lord's day is not

kept holy, God is not worshiped - at least not in the manner God has prescribed - and that is evil. Consider abortion: if one compromises on abortion, then a baby is murdered, and that is evil.

A person who desires to establish this friendship brotherhood with Our Lord removes themselves from this special friendship whenever they accept compromise. In accepting compromise they become collaborators with evil, they become quislings joining the forces of evil, and traitors to God.

But a person who desires to establish this friendship with Our Lord does not necessarily remove themselves from this friendship by committing sins. For, as is true for every military, there are medics who are able to heal the sick, the ill, the injured, and the wounded, who are in that condition as the result of sin. **They are even able to return to life those souls which sin has left dead.** The walking wounded bring themselves to the spiritual medic; and brothers in arms attempt to bring together in a myriad of ways the spiritual medics and those not willing to or unable to seek spiritual healing.

Everyone should attempt to realize and to understand that each person's life in this world is merely the beginning of that person's individual life. That physical death does not end a person's life. That every person continues to live despite the physical death they experience; merely awaiting

reunion with their physical body which will be perfected at the time of that reunion - perfected in glory or perfected in damnation in accordance with the eternal reward each has earned.

While the friends of Our Lord yet live in this world, that friendship is but tentative, their wounds for the most part not readily observed. But there is a sense of the common reliance, the bond, that marks those in the process of the battle. There is the beginning of the ease of association which is to come into ever greater full flower as each warrior's time of individual battle draws closer to being successfully completed.

Then, when a person's individual time of battle is completed and they leave this world and phase or stage of existence, the infections which remain, the pieces of evil which have become imbedded in the person, and anything which is not holy, are removed from the person. This leaves the person purified, not reflecting God, but emanating and radiating God. The strongest, most spectacular, and most intense manifestations being from the most severe injuries from sin; now healed, stronger, and more viable than before being damaged by sin.

It is the person, and the person radiating God, and the spectacular which is manifested in being healed from sin and the effects of sin, which is perceived by the band of brothers, the brothers in arms, the Warrior King Jesus Christ and His

warriors. Each knows the battles the others have fought, and the battles which they have fought together, all at a glance. Instead of ribbons on the chest, the very visage of each individual proclaims the victory. The most spectacular visage being that of the scourged, crucified, murdered, resurrected King, Jesus Christ.

Not only is there not, but there also can not be, friendship greater than, more intense than, more permanent than, or more comfortable than, this.

(And as an aside, it is interesting to note there have been several important battles which occurred on St. Crispin's Day in addition to the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. The Battle of Henderson Field at Guadalcanal in 1942, and the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Pacific theatre in 1944, were both fought on St. Crispin's Day, as were the Charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War in 1854, the Second Battle of El Alamein, and in the U.S. Civil War, the Second Battle of Springfield, Missouri, in 1861, and the Battle of Marais des Cygnes, Kansas (Mine Creek) in 1864. Saints Crispin and Crispinian were twins who were martyred c. 286 after enduring horrible torture; torture so severe that modern Western Church scholars - because of their weak faith - discredit the events of their martyrdom and the very existence of these Saints themselves.)

Ref: Philipp 4:4-7; John 1:19-28

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**YOU CAN ALWAYS HAVE AT LEAST
ONE FRIEND WHO IS WORTH
HAVING
[Friendship 4]**

In a manner similar to Saint John's informing the entire world, that the Creator was coming, therefore everyone should prepare for his coming, so too do we prepare to celebrate the birth of God Incarnate. So too, for the same reasons, should we prepare to commemorate His passion and death, and to celebrate His resurrection.

We do not celebrate His birth as we would celebrate the birth of someone we will never meet, or only meet in a formal setting, or with Whom we will probably never really become acquainted. We celebrate His birth as we would celebrate the birthday of a friend. We celebrate His resurrection uniquely, for no other has yet resurrected - the Holy Theotokos experienced Dormition.

We *know* Jesus Christ. How well each of us know Him has been and is up to each of us, is determined by each of us.

Unless something prevents us, we meet with Jesus at least every Sunday, or we should.

Be continually conscious that the Eucharist is God;

that in the Consecration, what was bread is now God; really God. You are able to do something immediately after the Consecration which you can not easily do at any other time. Immediately after the Consecration, at the Elevation or the Offering of God to God, look at the Eucharist and quietly say, “Hello God.” After the Consecration there are numerous prayers directed to God the Father. Look at the Eucharist or at where the Eucharist is as you pray these prayers, especially the Lord’s Prayer / The Our Father, and “talk” the words in conversation to Our Father (remembering, [*John 14:9*] “Philip, he that seeth me seeth the Father also.”). Likewise with those prayers directed to Jesus, and those directed to the Holy Ghost. Each One of Them is actually physically present in the Eucharist which is the Divine – human Person Jesus Christ. Attempt to not allow the “business” of the Divine Liturgy to interfere with your ongoing relationship with He who wishes to be your friend, and wishes for you to be His friend.

Conversely, some people approach the Eucharist with undue familiarity, even unto being cavalier, or with indifference.

The Eucharist is God and therefore always deserving of our utmost respect, reverence, awe, and what ever other words convey the concept of that which the Apostles experienced when Our Father spoke at the Transfiguration. Yet this same Being has made clear and certain His desire there be permanent friendship between Himself and

each one of us, and amongst all of us creatures and Himself.

What do friends do – not acquaintances, but friends?

Very often what they do is enjoy the company of each other. What do you do during Eucharistic Adoration? Do you ever just look at Jesus, and He just looks at you, like two friends in the same room enjoying each other's company but not really doing or saying anything else?

This does not mean you do not show respect for Jesus. You show respect for your other friends, it is how you treat your friends. If you do not show respect for your friends, then those whom you are classifying as friends are actually just acquaintances. If, as you consider this, you realize you do not have any friends, remember there is at least one Person who wishes to be your friend. That Person is Jesus.

If you have not already done it, take Him up on His offer of friendship. It is a friendship you will never regret, with a Friend you will always be happy to have.

Ref: 1Cor:4:1-5; Luke 3:1-6

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POSTSCRIPT WEDDING AND MARRIAGE

When a man and a woman marry it is customary for their families and friends to be invited to the wedding.

Many of these people will be friends of the married couple, of the married person, some for life.

How often is God invited: to the wedding, to the marriage? . . . As family . . . Friend . . . both?

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