

## April 10, 2016 – 3rd Sunday of Easter

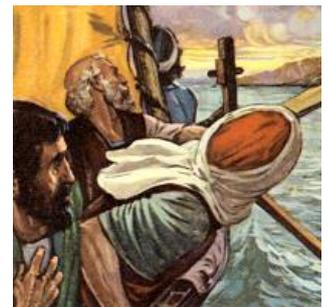
Friendship with Jesus is the one essential thing of life, regardless of any other circumstance—sickness or health, poverty or wealth, low or high position in society or church. That is the supreme truth John wants to tell us in his gospel. The good news is that Jesus desires our friendship, and offers it to all who welcome him in faith. We can identify with many of the persons Jesus encounters in the gospel—the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary, Lazarus (at whose death Jesus wept), Peter, Mary Magdalene, the beloved disciple. The gospel also warns us not to identify with those who reject friendship, and even betray friendship with Jesus. Jesus can also call us his friends because he has told us everything he has heard from his Father (Jn 15:15). The titles that we use to address Jesus (Messiah, Lord, Son of God), however orthodox and exalted they may be, are inadequate to express the full meaning of Jesus for us unless they include "Beloved Friend."

A personal, loving relationship with the Risen Lord clearly was a distinguishing characteristic of John's community. Sad experience, however, soon revealed that individual relationships with Jesus were not sufficient to hold the community together. We can see from the First Letter of John that various individuals, claiming to speak with the Spirit of Jesus, began to teach false doctrines. Eventually they formed splinter groups that separated people from the community. In our gospel passage today, John shows us that individual friendships with Jesus must be complemented by authority within the community. The Risen Lord commissions Peter to serve that function.

That authority that Jesus gives, however, must be exercised out of deep friendship with him. "Do you love me?" Jesus asks Peter the crucial question three times as he commissions him to tend and to feed his sheep. The principle, of course, applies not only to the successor of Peter, but to everyone who exercises authority in the church, from the family to the chancery. Only in this way does human authority become an expression of the authority of Jesus, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

In today's gospel passage, John also links friendship with Jesus with his real presence at our Eucharistic meal. The meal Jesus shares with his disciples together with the feeding of the large crowd (John 6) and the Last Supper Discourse reveal the meaning of the Eucharist for us. Jesus, the Risen Lord, truly is with us at our sacred meal—speaks to us, prays with us, leads us in self-giving to the Father, gives himself to us as our bread and wine. He calls us his disciples and his friends: the life implications remain the same. Jesus also says to us: "If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). The way we will fulfill his request to follow him as disciples in service of others is unique and particular for each of us. We can count on the Spirit of Jesus to guide us in discerning what that service will be.

*[Campion P. Gavalier, O.S.B., Shortened from [http://www.saintvincentarchabbey.org/news\\_print?id=2731](http://www.saintvincentarchabbey.org/news_print?id=2731)]*



## NEWS

**CONFESSIONS** – There will be confessions in English after tomorrow's mass, April 10.