

Rector's Essay

Stewardship of our Relationship with Jesus: What a Friend we Have!

By Jarrett Kerbel (11/06/26)

Our God is not an abstract, theoretical God. Our God comes to us in Jesus, a relatable friend with a friendly face who has done everything to prove his loving friendship. As Jesus says in the Gospel of John:

"*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*" (John 15:15)

Throughout the Gospel Jesus tells us that he is our ever-persistent, always available, abundantly loving, and faithful friend. We simply need to turn to him and he will be there as our Good Shepherd, the one who leaves the 99 secure sheep to find the one lost sheep.

When my spiritual director led me through the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, he taught me to turn to Jesus as my friend in my prayers and meditation. Jesus, like a friend, has nothing but good will toward me and will only ever offer me the truth I need to hear and the encouragement I need to grow.

Turning to my friend Jesus is a sustaining practice in my prayer life. For example, I say to Jesus my friend, "I have a really hard, challenging conversation today. I am anxious. Help me with that. Guide me. How do I say what I need to say effectively in your gracious spirit?" Just turning and asking, in my experience, is enough to invite the spiritual intervention of Jesus. Almost always, I feel more calm, more centered, more free after I consult with Jesus. I am reminded that he will give me the words and the spirit I need when I need them.

As a brief aside, I want to note that Jesus is often a better friend to our souls than we are. Many of us - me included - have a harsh critical voice inside always ready to punish any perceived mistake or flaw. In short, we are not very good friends to ourselves. Personally, I carry a harsh voice that is always ready to call me pathetic and stupid. Only a few years ago I realized that I could counter that voice by choosing to be a good friend to myself.

To be stewards of the gift of our relationship with Jesus, the only thing required is to respond to the gift of friendship with friendship in return. In other words, stay in touch, share with vulnerability and sincerity, consult and inquire, open up your heart, risk loving in return. Jesus will always show us his friendship by responding to us with grace and truth. We can count on his love and his clarity. In fact we must, if we are to grow toward God.