

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, May 24th 2013

Today we discover, or, perhaps, rediscover, some rather applicable wisdom from Sirach regarding friendship, which is delivered and received in the wise ways of a faithful friend.

Sirach writes, “Let your acquaintances be many, but one in a thousand your confidant .” In our human world, the word “friend” is used liberally to refer to the many acquaintances we keep in our day-to-day living; people with whom we talk and share with, at least superficially, on a wide range of topics and experiences. As social media applications become more and more integrated into everyday interactions, we now live in a world where “social networks” and quantifiable lists of “Friends,” “Contacts,” and/or “Followers” simultaneously measure the vastness of our social linkages and promulgate our triumphs and tribulations, wisdom and whines, whether banal or vital. While these networks and personal connections have value and enrich our human experience, today’s reading cautions us of the all too often self-invested purposes of these friendships, and addresses the characteristics of a “faithful friend.”

Sirach goes on to write, “A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one finds a treasure.” So, while counting a multitude of friends seems essential, we learn that some people will not be our faithful friends.

And yet we find sturdy shelter in our few confidants. As I reflect on the more intimate (and diverse) group of people who hold this confidant role in my life, I cannot help but to think about Sirach’s final thoughts on faithful friends:

“A faithful friend is a live-saving remedy, such as he who fears God finds; For he who fears God behaves accordingly and his friends will be life himself.”

In my life my faithful friends have been those people who have brought towards God, who have been a means for God to work through to offer guidance, hope, and love in times of both consolation and desolation. In times of distress and joy my true companions bring me closer to God. In this way, my faithful friends allow me to grow in my friendship with God.

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