

Jesus the Friend

Grace: Ask for the grace to better know and understand Jesus so that your love for Jesus will grow and your desire to imitate him will increase.

Introduction:

This contemplation gives you an opportunity to see how Jesus treats his friends and in particular YOU. It may be hard to imagine or believe that Jesus really is your friend; however, as you reflect on your experiences over the past several weeks you can see how much you have discovered about Jesus. Continue to spend time with Jesus and to learn from Him. As you look back, what is happening with your own desire to grow closer to Jesus, to understand Him better, and to follow Him more closely? If your desire has grown, give thanks to God for this grace and continue to do your best to be fully open to the experience. If your desire has not grown, continue to ask God for that which you sincerely desire.

Friends do many things together and it is important that you think about your own personal relationship with Jesus as it has been revealed to you thus far through the Spiritual Exercises. If you consider some of your own friendships for a moment you will probably recognize that the friends you feel closest to are the ones that you have done a variety of things with. They seem to know everything about you and you can share anything with them. Do not be afraid to appear or say something foolish. Peter gives a good example of someone who seems to regularly make a fool out of himself. With a good friend it is OK to be silly and foolish. It can be helpful to remember that Jesus likes to have fun too and in his own way can be quite playful. Keep in mind that Jesus desires to share His life with you.

There are many examples of Jesus offering friendship and being a friend. You can choose to listen to Jesus talk about who his friends are (John 15:1-17), or to go with Jesus to the wedding party at Cana (John 2:1-11), or to venture out with Jesus on a boat (Matthew 14: 22-34), or to hang out with Jesus at Mary and Martha's house (Luke 10:38-42), or to be chosen and called by Jesus to travel with Him (Luke 5:1-11), or "simply", as if you can ever just simply do anything with Jesus, to enjoy a meal with Jesus (Matthew 14:13-21). As you can tell, there are numerous possibilities. You could even choose an alternative passage if you have one that you feel better represents your growing friendship with Jesus.

As you have become accustomed to, consider the passage that you choose from multiple perspectives to find the role that feels right. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in making the most out of this time for prayerful reflection so that you might be open to receive everything that God desires to share with you. As you hang out with Jesus what concerns come to your mind? What do you talk about? After a day of activity with Jesus, what is it like to be able to just chill and sit in Jesus' presence. You may find that you do not need words or you may find it a good time to talk with Jesus about something in particular that is on your mind.

At this point, you hopefully will begin to experience greater freedom with the reflections. As your friend Jesus makes himself more known to you and you to Him and as Jesus directs you more, less external direction is needed (i.e. from these sheets). Follow Jesus. Trust the Spirit!

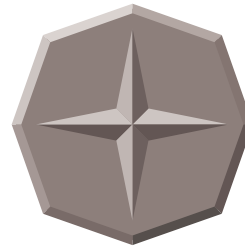


A Point to Ponder:

You will have likely noticed that some activities seem to help and some other activities seem to hinder your prayer. You cannot change some things, but you may find it helpful to rearrange what you can. A small shift in your daily schedule can produce a significant change in your prayer. For example, you can choose to get up earlier in the morning to have some quiet time for reflection or meditation. Another option is to drop some television time or computer game time. This kind of adjustment is the most proper "penance" you can do while engaged in the Spiritual Exercises because you are clearly demonstrating to Jesus that you want to spend more time with Him.

John 15:1-17 -The Vine and the Branches

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. 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. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.



John 2:1-11-Wedding at Cana

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

Luke 5:1-11--The Call of Peter

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

*God did not invite the children of Israel to leave the slavery of Egypt.
He commanded them to do so.*

--Thomas Merton

Matthew 14:22-34 Jesus walks on water - Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.

Matthew 14:13-21 Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand - When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. "Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Luke 10:38-42- At the Home of Martha and Mary

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."



In these or similar words ... Well, when I thought about it I thought I was one of Jesus' best friends. We had grown up together with our group of friends, which was pretty much everyone in town. We would run around being mischievous and not having a care in the world. We would always talk about our families and then go watch them fishing or their various crafts. But as we grew up Jesus changed. He changed from the not a care in the world person to a person who was always doing what was right and didn't want to go with us on our pranks. So over time we grew apart. We lived in the same town but our friends split in two parts: the ones who still wanted to have fun and then the Jesus followers. I kept on losing friends to Jesus as they would go and follow him. So I grew into an adult and was done with my childish things but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't stop thinking about Jesus. I would see him in dreams and in my various thoughts. But I couldn't bring myself to go down there just to see Jesus because of my pride. So when word came that a friend that we kind of knew was having a wedding in our old town I was ready to go immediately. I traveled down there and got to the wedding and what you have to understand is that these weddings are big and last many days, but Jesus was such a celebrity I saw him right when I came in. So I went to talk to old friends and they all said to go find Jesus and talk to him. So this was it, I swallowed my pride and made a B line right for him but before I could get to him his mother darted in front of me and said something to Jesus. Jesus replied, "Fill the jars with water" and the servants scurried off to get it. So I sat there still thinking what I would say to him when I hear a ruckus in the room to my left. I go see and the water had turned to wine. I sat there thinking. All of these years I had been avoiding him I should have been embracing him. So I turned around to run and hug him but when I turned he was already right there saying, "my old friend it has been too long". I jumped on him and we just laughed and laughed. I never left his side again.

Practicing What Your Preach ... To better understand and appreciate the gift of friendship and the importance of maintaining healthy relationships, consider inviting a friend out to dinner. Reflect upon how the details of that dinner can reveal a lot about the relationship. The place you choose to go, what you talk about, how long you spend enjoying each other's company all speak in some way about your friendship. Strengthen the bonds that connect you and be attentive to how Jesus may be present in your friend (and perhaps even in you).