

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 10:25-26, 33-35, 44-48 1 John 4:7-10 John 15:12-17

HOMILY

"You are my friends!I have chosen you"

In today's gospel reading, Jesus uses the language of friendship to describe his relationship with us. We all value friendship. We have a deep need to befriend someone and to be befriended by someone. When a couple who are married regard one another as their closest friend, the marriage is likely to be happy and to last. Friendship is a form of love that everyone can experience, whether married or not. The Jewish Scriptures, especially the Wisdom books, have a lot to say about friendship. It is regarded there as a gift from God. According to the Book of Sirach, *'faithful friends are a sturdy shelter: whoever finds one has found a treasure.'* It is out of this Jewish tradition of the value of friendship that Jesus says to his disciples in today's gospel reading, *'I call you friends'*. Jesus expresses his friendship for his disciples and all of us, in two ways.

Firstly, he has befriended us by giving us his life, laying down his life for us.

During the second world war in a Nazi concentration camp, Maximilian Kolbe, a Polish priest, gave his life so that a fellow prisoner, a married man, might live. He befriended that man in the most radical way possible. Secondly, Jesus has also befriended us by revealing to us what is deepest and most precious to him, his love and knowledge of God his Father, *'I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father'*.

The Lord has befriended each one of us. He has chosen each one of us. *'You did not choose me, no, I chose you'*. We have been befriended by the Lord, chosen by him, out of love.

In any human friendship, two people have to keep choosing one another. If only one person chooses the other, but is not chosen in return, the friendship will die. As he continues to choose us, he wants us to choose him, and he waits for us to do so.