

June 16, 2019 God Friended Me Homily: “Are you on face book?” It is a question I am often asked. “Indeed I am” is my standard reply. As many of you doubtless know, Face book is part of the social media network, and is enormously popular with the public. It affords the subscribing members limitless opportunities to engage friends, past and present, in conversation and keeps them up to speed on current events. One of the features of Face book is so-called “friending”. One can respond to another member’s request to be a friend or he can make the same request of another person. Forming or continuing a friendship on-line is one of the attractions of social media. It enables you to be connected to others.

Several years ago the distinguished American scholar, James Schall, a Jesuit priest, penned an article on the subject of the Trinity in a journal of opinion. He singles out one of the great philosophers of the Pre-Christian world, the pagan Greek Aristotle. Aristotle expressed an opinion that God was perhaps lonely... that he had no friends. God did not have what is most uplifting in our human experience. One can readily appreciate the philosopher’s concern. Just being in the company of a trusted friend is one of life’s most satisfying delights.

Is there an answer to Aristotle’s loneliness question? The answer is a resounding yes. It is the Trinity, the central mystery of the Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God Himself. The God of Christianity is no solitary being. He is not alone. God exists in relationship even in Himself. The inner life of God is a Trinity of Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To quote the late, Pope John Paul, recently canonized by the Church, “God in his deepest mystery is not solitude, but a family... since He is Himself fatherhood, son-ship and the essence of the family, which is love”.

Let us not forget that every time we sign ourselves with the sign of the cross, we remember God’s name in which we were baptized. And since we are created in the image and likeness of God we become an image not so much in our moments of solitude but in communion with others. On this Father’s day let us consider some every day words that imply a relation to others: father, mother, aunt, sister, brother, grandparent. And then there is the word “friend”. Recall the words of Jesus addressed to his disciples: “You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have learned from my Father”. (Jn.15:14-16)

When the Quakers, a Christian sect gathers for prayer and the reading of scripture, it is a meeting of friends. Indeed, the Quaker is a member of the “Society of Friends”.

Recall the popularity of the long-running series, “Friends”, once seen on prime time television and, to this day, very popular in syndication.

In our secular age of rampant individualism, and an increasing animus towards people of faith, it is vital that we re-discover the central importance of communion, particularly regarding worship. “Why do I need to attend Mass?” is a complaint one often hears. What would heaven be like in the absence of our family and our dear friends? Would our joy then be diminished? Ours is a communal faith.

As I bring my reflections to a close, I should like to quote another Jesuit scholar, the late Martin D’Arcy, an English priest. In his reflections on the Most Holy Trinity, he wrote the following words: “All down through the centuries saints have found in the thought of the Holy Trinity a subject of never-ending meditation and devotion. They see in that final perfection of love, for which love between persons craves. The Christian God is not like the abstract entities of philosophical religions; his Godhead is not impersonal; it is a living, inexhaustible fund of love, which consists of personal relations.” In view of what this great scholar has written, would it be unreasonable to speak of the Trinity as a loving community of friends?

Amen!