

Friendship Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, August 14, 2017 8:15 AM
Dt 10:12-22; **Jn 15:12-16** St. Maximilian Kolbe, priest and martyr (When one lays
down one's life for one's friends, one is simply acknowledging the power and the value of the
friend, which is of course extraordinary in the case of God coming to lay down life.)

“No one has greater love than this to lay down one's life for one's friends.”

This Gospel of John is of course the most intimate gospel, and we should expect that since the author is the beloved disciple or at least the beloved disciple knew the author and was a source of the author's grasp of the mystery that is embodied in Jesus.

Now in this particular text he is talking about friendship. What does it mean to be a friend? St. Thomas says about this that **a friend is someone to whom you say, “What is mine is yours and yours is mine.”** When God says that to his creation that is very profound. Again, Aquinas says that **God became human so that humanity can become divine.** We tend to think of these as exaggerations, but in this case they are really not exaggerations at all. They are actually truth; that is actually the truth that we are elevated to the level of the divine.

St. Thomas also says that really **only God is; everything else only is by participation in God.** We just don't have a sense of this unity that is fundamental to our faith; it happens to be also fundamental to reason, but reason doesn't see it at all. And I might add quite sadly, because so many of the problems in the world are due to the fact that **we imagine ourselves to be separate and we cannot be. We cannot be separate from God or from each other.** The creation is one organism. The apostles were those chosen to learn this in their own experience, to incorporate into their own experience. So he says, “I call you friends,” because what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine. So **when one lays down one's life for one's friends, one is simply acknowledging the power and the value of the friend,** which is of course extraordinary in the

case of God coming to lay down life. But that's exactly **the whole mission of Jesus, to pour out himself, not to seek equality with God something to be grasped at, but to let go of all.** And this is the pattern of our lives.

It's a pattern lived out by **St. Maximilian Kolbe** because when he had the opportunity to, he **gave up his life for someone else.** Now that person that he gave up his life for actually survived Auschwitz, I believe, although his family did not. The reason Maximilian gave up his life was that the man had a family. Sadly, the family died, but the man survived. But **we don't know the consequences of our choices.** We just know or at least hopefully find out what they are in the sight of God, what God's wisdom leads us to, what God's compassion leads us to, what God's knowledge leads us to; and **if we are willing, we providentially follow that wisdom and knowledge,** as did Maximilian living out this gospel.

It ends with: **"It was not you who chose me but I who chose you."** That's important for us to keep in mind too. We are aware that throughout the world traditional **Christianity seems to be on a downward spiral.** Maybe that's all part of divine providence. **Maybe it's because God is wanting to create something totally new.** This is God's choice. **We are called to be his servants and his friends.** We are called to work for him, but we are called also to understand what we are doing.