



The 6th Sunday of Easter, Year B
John 15:9-17
May 9, 2021

These are more of Jesus' last words to his disciples, which we have been hearing gradually these past several weeks from the Gospel of John. It is their last night together, the night before everything would change. Jesus sees it coming, and he continues to use these final hours to underscore what is most important.

The lights are dim, the candles on the table are burning low after the long, poignant supper; the disciples are sated and sleepy, and Jesus, his face intent and illuminated by the candlelight, says, "Look, for real--for real, for real--if you remember nothing else, remember this: God has created you out of love. God loves you and, like a good friend does, wants nothing more than to be with you. Just to be with you. So, I call you friend--not stranger, not servants, but friend. I see you, I'm with you, and I love you. And I want you to love one another, for that, my friends, is joy."

How amazing is it that God wants to be with us, and that there is nothing that God won't do or can't do to be with us?! I know this may sound too good to be true. Yet the saying "A friend is one who knows all about you and still loves you" certainly applies to God. There is nothing that we need to hide from God, nor from one another; we need simply show up, to show up for one another.

We come to church--in whatever ways we can, through whatever means we can--to know that friendship, for we experience it with and through one another. We come to church with so many different feelings, on so many different days, entire spectrums of memories and emotions on our minds and hearts. We come when we're sad, when we're exuberant, when we're nervous, when we're tired. We come in search of comfort, inspiration, and hope, and we find it, for God shows up for us. There is nothing that God won't do to show that God is with us, as friend.

Even on that night before everything changed and there became chasms of distance, of despair, and even of death, Jesus said their friendship would endure, and that they--each of them, all of them--would continue to be transformed through knowing one another. The Rev. Dr. Sam Wells, whom you hear me quote quite a bit, says that to say "'I am your friend' is to say 'I am allowing myself to be changed by knowing you.'" To say "I am your friend" is to say "I allow my life to be reshaped by knowing you."

Here, at and through Christ Church Detroit, we allow ourselves to be changed by knowing one another. You make me who I am, and I hope I help you to simply be who you are. We help raise one another's children, and we hope that among us, young people discover more about their identities in the safety and depth of this beloved community.

In just a few moments we will hear from a special speaker: Miss Olivia Benbow, who is graduating from high school. Here at Christ Church, hearing from our graduating seniors on or around Mother's Day is a most beloved tradition, and you, dear Olivia, are most beloved.

Before you speak, Olivia, I just wish to tell you that when we have been in church together, I have loved watching you lead us as a crucifer, carrying the cross with seemingly unflappable purpose, poise, and joy. I have loved watching you show visitors around the church, pointing out places that are most sacred to you. I have loved how you welcomed me and my family, especially my kids, who look up to you. I've loved hearing you play your trumpet in the Christmas pageant and in the empty sanctuary on Sunday mornings, as your mother or brothers finish up what they're doing.

Olivia, I hope that you have some sense of the joy that you bring us, just by being you. I hope that you remember and trust that you are a leader. Where you go, people will follow; we certainly do. Always, Christ Church Detroit is here for you and home for you. Most of all, Olivia, I hope you remember the home you have in God, the God of love, who created you and is still creating you out of love,

Christ Church Detroit
960 East Jefferson Avenue, Detroit, MI 48207
313-259-6688 | www.christcd.org

who wishes to just be with you, no matter what; and who bids you and all of us to love, and love, and love some more, so that our joy - your joy - may be complete.

Christ Church Detroit
960 East Jefferson Avenue, Detroit, MI 48207
313-259-6688 | www.christcd.org