



**A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan
by The Reverend Maureen L. Martin, *Priest Associate***

**The 2nd Sunday of Easter (Year C)
24 April 2022**

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So a week has passed in our time since Easter, but from the perspective of the gospel reading, last week was just a few hours ago. It is still this first day of the new creation. So earlier in the day, Jesus presented himself to the female disciples who run to tell the others who, by the time the sun is setting, are gathered together, scared and unsure of their fate. Jesus comes to them again, and he enters that room that they're in with the same gentleness and hiddenness that he entered the world. And yet both entrances, his birth, this entrance into the room are like one. They're powerful. They're cosmic life-changing events for the whole world, and yet they're simple. He was not born in a palace, but in a stable, he does not enter Jerusalem on a war horse, but on a donkey. He does not return on top of a mountain, but in a hot and stuffy fear-filled space.

Whether 2000 years ago, or right this very minute, the savior of the world is always suddenly here with us in all of our moments, quiet or otherwise. This is what the divine friendship of God for humanity looks like. The Lord is always at hand. And our friendships among each other are a copy of this divine friendship and meant to be a transparency for the world through which others see God. In other words, at its best, human friendship is an icon of the greater reality that surrounds us. And following the resurrection, Jesus has come to shine a light on the power of friendship in his holy and eternal church. Well, that's great, but I don't think we always live up to that expectation. When we're out and about in the world, what do others see of Christ through us and in us?

I was recently at a party and I had so many wonderful conversations with the other guests at the party, all new people to me, new friendships being formed. I had to try and boil down the gist of those conversations, what it came down to was people said, finally, I didn't expect to like a priest. Totally sad commentary on this common denominator among all clergy is that somehow we don't present in our lives a very clear window onto the friendship that Jesus brought, but it's not just us. Christians



have a reputation problem these days everywhere. And in general in the world, the art of friendship has suffered quite a bit, not just due to two years of isolation, but also just the ravaging effects of social media on our friendships. So we have a lot of Facebook friends now, but do we have as many friends anymore who come up to us, are present to us, who are like Jesus, self-giving.

So this pattern of divine friendship is present in all good friendships. You know what it looks like. You've all probably had that experience where you're having a terrible time and you think of somebody and then the phone rings and it's them. And they are immediately present and suddenly all those troubles that were in your mind and in your heart start to evaporate. Among children, look at their friendships, how they defend one another, love one another, walk hand in hand together. All friendship, divine or otherwise, is dependent on this kind of presence. And the intensity of a good friendship is always a window into to the infinite pattern of God's love for the world, whether we realize it or not.

And so Jesus comes as a friend back into that room. And think about the love that he shows for them. He comes in, he offers his peace, he offers his very self. And the topic of the day is forgiveness, there's no better friend than that. We are to be like Jesus to one another. Self-giving, generous, forgiving, but we always need reminding, don't we?

When Jesus comes the third time to see Thomas, it's not to chastise Thomas, there's no critique of Thomas. There's just an additional layer of reassurance of this divine friendship of which I am speaking. Thomas had gone missing. We do the same. And sometimes it's so hard when we've gone missing in a relationship to come back. We're so afraid that our friend will judge us. We all have friends who've gone missing from our lives and we're afraid to reach out to them too. Again, there is this fear of judgment. Let us always remember to take the risk, to reach back out, to bridge the gap and to be fully present for our friends in this life the way that Jesus is fully present to us. Amen.