

Sirach 6: 14-17

It is said that home is where they have to take you in. I, however, maintain that home is where your friends are. Having just returned to Paris after three weeks “home”, I continue to bask in the truth of my definition. As usual, my musings are mostly musical.

Of course, the soundtrack of my life includes the music of my foolish youth – but then, doesn't the music of our youth impact the rest of our lives? It is out of a childish vision of friendship that Barney sings to his little pals:

I love you You love me
We're a happy family
With a great big hug and a kiss from me to you.
Won't you say you love me too

The Mills Brothers add what Paul Harvey would have called “the rest of the story”:

You always hurt the one you love
The one you shouldn't hurt at all
You always take the sweetest rose
And crush it 'till the petals fall
You always break the kindest heart
With a hasty word you can't recall...

In search of a resolution to the conundrum, my mind wends to the dulcet tones of another James – namely James Taylor:

Ain't it good to know that you've got a friend
When people can be so cold
They'll hurt you, and desert you
And take your soul if you let them, oh yeah, don't you let 'em now
You just call out my name
And you know wherever I am
I'll come running to see you again, oh baby, don't you know
Winter, spring, summer or fall
Hey now, all you have to do is call
And I'll be there, yes I will
You've got a friend...

Indeed. And this baby boomer cannot help remembering another song with a similar message, this one by Simon and Garfunkel:

When you're weary, feeling small
When tears are in your eyes, I'll dry them all
I'm on your side, oh, when times get rough
And friends just can't be found

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Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down

Aren't these but contemporary renderings of the Scripture quote chosen as a title for this article? (Be encouraged to look it up!) As we used to say, "What goes around comes around." In other words: to have a friend, be a friend.

The flimsy foundation of fleeting friendship where faithfulness is often found wanting leads us to search beyond our meager powers and rickety resolve. I think back on the missal which we all grew up with, Fr. Michael Shchudlo's My Divine Friend. Doesn't this echo Jesus' relationship with His disciples? As He Himself said, "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (John 15: 15)"

Ah, yes, with God all things are possible – even in spite of our best efforts to mess things up. Moreover, as February dawns, we Byzantines will have been celebrating Christmas for forty days, so I dare to close this reflection with a carol whose lyrics were composed by Robert Southwell :

1 Let folly praise that fancy loves;
I praise and love that child
whose heart no thought, whose tongue no word,
whose hand no deed defiled.
I praise him most, I love him best;
all praise and love are his.
While him I love, in him I live,
and cannot live amiss.

2 Love's sweetest mark, laud's highest theme,
our most desired light.
To love him life, to leave him death,
to live in him delight.
He mine by gift, I his by debt,
thus each to other due:
first friend he was, best friend he is;
all times will find him true.

3 Though young, yet wise, though small, yet strong,
though man, yet God he is;
as wise he knows, as strong he can,
as God he loves to bless.
His knowledge rules, his strength defends,
his love doth cherish all;
his birth our joy, his life our light,
his death our end of thrall.

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