

Thanking Christ, a friend

6th Sunday of Easter (May 25): (R3) John 15:9-17; (R1) Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; (R2) 1 John 4:7-10.

When Jesus spoke of us, he did not call us "servants" but "friends." A friend is one who sympathizes with us, who understands us.

When Republican Senator John McCain entered politics, he found an unlikely mentor in Morris Udall, a Democratic senator who later became Secretary of the Interior. After he retired from politics, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Senator McCain made it a regular practice to visit Udall and cheer him up. McCain was one of the few people, and the only politician, to visit Udall as he slipped away into an unconscious, uncommunicative state.

Isn't that the sort of thing we hope for in a friend? Someone who feels our pain and does not turn his back?

Friendships are different from all other relationships. Unlike acquaintanceship, friendship is based on love. Unlike lovers and married couples, it is free of jealousy. Unlike children and parents, it knows neither criticism nor resentment. It has no status in law. Business partnerships and marriages are based on a contract. Parents are bound by the law. But, friendships are freely entered into, freely given, freely exercised. Having a friend and being a friend is something very special.

A 10-year-old boy entered his small mongrel dog at a local dog show. For nearly an hour, the boy gently groomed and hugged his pet. When his name was called, he tenderly took the dog's head into his cupped hands with all the love a small boy could show. "Now you mustn't be upset if you don't win a



Father Albert Shamon

A word for Sunday

prize. You see, they don't know you as well as I do." We have a friend, Jesus, who knows us better than anyone knows us and still calls us friend.

In Washington there stands a moving memorial to the sacrifices of our soldiers in the Vietnam conflict. This memorial is known to many simply as The Wall. There is a book about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial titled *Offerings at the Wall*. The photographs in the book record some of the 30,000 objects and letters that have been placed at The Wall, as if at a shrine, by relatives and comrades of the men and women whose sacrifices are memorialized there. In 1982 a U.S. Navy officer walked up to the trench where the concrete for the foundation of The Wall was being poured. He tossed something into it and saluted. A workman asked him what he was doing. He said he was giving his dead brother's Purple Heart to The Wall. That was his way of saying "thank you" for one who had laid down his life for his friends.

In Latin America the people have a wonderful way of saying "thank you" to those who have given their lives for freedom. In public gatherings they call out the names of sis-

ters and brothers who have been killed and tell their stories. When each name is called out, the community responds "Presente! Presente!"

In a very real sense those who have been killed are present and alive. There is a commitment to keep their spirit and life alive and real by chanting "Presente!"

Memorial Day is a day to remember the debt we have to so many, to say "thank you" and to recommit our lives to that for which they died.

The same thing can happen regarding Christ. We can enjoy the benefits of our salvation and never give much thought to what Christ has done for us. But we ought to find a way to say "thank you," because the future of our world depends on it. We take up the cause of freedom and we take up the cross of Christ so that others will enjoy the same benefits.

Let us not forget how shallow are our means of often saying "thank you" for what has been done in our behalf. We have a friend who died for us. What are we doing in return?

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, May 26
Acts 16:11-15;
Psalms 149:1-6A, 9B;
John 15:26-16:4A

Tuesday, May 27
Acts 16:22-34;
Psalms 138:1-3, 7C-8;
John 16:5-11

Wednesday, May 28
Acts 17:15, 22-18:1;
Psalms 148:1-2, 11-14;
John 16:12-15

Thursday, May 29
Acts 1:1-11;
Psalms 47:2-3, 6-9;
Ephesians 1:17-23
or 4:1-13 or 4:1-7, 11-13;
Mark 16:15-20

Friday, May 30
Acts 18:9-18;
Psalms 47:2-7;
John 16:20-23

Saturday, May 31
Zephaniah 3:14-18 or
Romans 12:9-16; (Ps)
Isaiah 12:2-3, 4BCD, 5-6;
Luke 1:39-56

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