

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

GOD FRIENDED ME...

Recently I heard about a new TV show on CBS this Fall. The TV show has an interesting title: "God Friendened me." It's a humorous drama starring Brandon Michael Hall as an outspoken atheist whose life is completely turned upside down when he receives a friend request from God on Facebook. By confirming the friend request, he becomes an agent of positive change in the lives of people all around him. I watched the pilot for the TV show and while not a specifically "religious" show, it does present faith in God in a reasonable and balanced way.

The truth is that all of us have been "Friendened by God." The concept is not new! In Saint John's gospel Jesus tells us: "I do not call you slaves any longer; instead, I call you friends." To be a friend of God is the greatest invitation that can be offered to us in this life.

On social media sites such as Facebook, a person can have many virtual "friends." Some of them may not really be "friends" in the actual sense of the word, but just acquaintances we have met through the years. Some of my "friends" on Facebook I have never met personally! A friend request is sent and all you have to do is confirm or delete.

Of course, God does not communicate to us over Facebook but through "Faithbook." When we read and pray over the scriptures, we can discover as an old hymn once put it, "What a friend we have in Jesus!" Some of the qualities that a good friend would possess would be loyalty, honesty, being trustworthy and understanding. The Lord is our friend par excellence and He exemplifies all those qualities.

Jesus descended to this earth taking our human condition and relating to us in every way possible except for sin. He did this out of great love for all of us who had gone astray. To quote Saint John's gospel again, "greater love than this no man has than he lay down his life for a friend." Through the sacrifice of Christ, all of us who were once at enmity with God have been truly friendened,

In Baptism, we have all been called by Christ to the life of the spirit and grace. However, some of us do not respond positively to that invitation. We ignore God's friend request and immerse ourselves in worldly and material things which are more tangible to us. There is a famous painting of Jesus titled, "Christ the Light of the World." The artist was an Englishman by the name of Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ, lantern in hand, knocking at a door. When the painting was first exhibited, people praised it as a true work of art.

However, somebody raised a criticism. The criticism? There was no handle on the door! Hunt explained the reason for its absence. "The door," he said, "represents the human heart and that can only be opened up from the inside!" How true. If we keep the door shut to Jesus there is no way he can enter in. So let's open the door to Jesus.

The classic book *The Imitation of Christ* reminds us: "You cannot live well without a friend and if Jesus is not your friend above all, you will be very sad and desolate." We all need friends in this life and the love and friendship of God is something that we should cultivate and not lose. By our prayer, attendance at Mass and our living a moral life, may we prove that we are really his true friends!

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome