

# COME MEET MY FRIEND

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*'Come, Meet My Friend'*

by

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## *An Invitation*

“**C**OME, Meet My Friend,” is a long playing recording available at Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Indiana. It is presented here in pamphlet form as an invitation to Catholics to appreciate more deeply the infinite love which Christ bears for all of us. For those not of our faith, it is an invitation to come and experience for themselves the infinite treasure of our Catholic faith and how we can be united with Christ in both a spiritual and even a physical way while still here on earth.

In harmony with the desire of Pope John XXIII to bring into unity all who call themselves by the beautiful title of Christian, may the laity use the record and this pamphlet as an instrument to share their faith with others. The commission of Christ to “Go teach all Nations” is binding on all, the laity as well as the bishops and priests. It is Christ who wants all of us united for He said: “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring and they shall hear My voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd” St. John 10:16.

## *Author*



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## *'Come, Meet My Friend'*

**M**AY I have a few minutes of your time to tell you about a friend of mine, who would like very much to meet you and be your friend? I am very sure that if you come to know Him you will love Him very much. I trust you will not think me presumptuous when I say that He is my Friend. I wouldn't dare say this if He hadn't called me by that wonderous name Himself. I am not the only one to whom He said: "No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). That means you, too! And it means every human being in all the world for He is a friend to all and wants each and everyone of us to be His friend.

### *PROUD OF HIS PICTURE*

Not long ago I became very interested in a patient in our Veteran's Hospital. I visited him many times. Like so many in our day, when tensions seemingly abound as never before, he was stricken with a heart attack. The first time I visited him I was rather surprised at a large photograph on the little stand beside his bed. I looked at the picture and then the inscription at the bottom which read: "To my friend, Eddie LaPointe, from General Dwight D. Eisenhower." Naturally the patient is very proud of his picture and he

wants all to know that the President of the United States is his friend.

He has another Friend, however, his Friend and mine to whom he is greatly devoted. Since he has lived many miles from a church, his great hope for recovery has been that he might locate close to a church where his Friend dwells. He really loves Him and it has been a real inspiration to bring his Friend right to his bedside because his face simply beamed as he received his Friend under the appearance of the little White Host.

No doubt you realize there is no greater treasure this world can afford than a true friend. If you have found one consider yourself highly blessed, for you have found a treasure which money cannot purchase nor power procure. However, like all things earthly we can lose this treasure. He may disappoint you when you need him most or perhaps you take his friendship for granted and through your own fault and negligence lose his love. At best every human friendship must one day come to an end, in spite of pledges made that your friendship is eternal and no power will ever separate you from each other.

This is really the kind of friend we want, a friend in whom we can confide with absolute trust, a friend who will stand by us in need, a friend whose love



will really endure forever. But where can we find such a friend? History is replete with the accounts of beautiful friendships that lasted until death; others that began well but ended in hatred. There is only one Friend whose love goes on and on, even beyond the grave. This is the Friend I would like to have you meet so that you, too, might experience the sweetness of His friendship.

### *CRAVING OF THE HEART*

Christ is my Friend and yours. Like every human heart you have been craving for His love, but because you may not have found Christ or experienced His love you have turned that craving of the heart to creatures and sought your satisfaction there. If you did, can you say you have found genuine happiness? Wealth does not bring happiness. It simply attaches the heart to material things and shuts the door to that joy and peace which comes from loving God. Strangely enough, the poor in spirit are the ones who are happiest. St. Francis of Assisi has proven this so wonderfully, for when he, who could have been rich, divested himself of the bonds which tied him to earth, his spirit soared heavenward and so great was the joy that emanated from his person that by the thousands men and women wanted to follow in his footsteps. Even today, after 750 years,

there are over four million who follow a Rule of Life laid down by him for our guidance.

Is happiness and joy to be found in fame or power? Few have found it a source of joy. Those whom the world acclaim as heroes or heroines today are forgotten tomorrow; and what heartaches are experienced by those who must battle constantly to retain their popularity and then, after all their efforts, see themselves supplanted by another. Power, too, is only shortlived. Invariably it is won by trampling on the rights of others or almost literally wading through blood to gain the coveted goal. Power like fame is like the sword of Damocles suspended by a single thread.

Others, and their name is legion, seek happiness in the gratification of the senses and their lower appetites. It is apparent to all that our age is surfeited with sex. Not only is it exploited in the entertainment world but it has invaded even our economic life so that hardly a single article is advertised without some reference to the subject. Giving in to the cravings of our lower nature brings only temporary pleasure at best. Passion, like a raging fire, consumes but never satisfies. Soon it exacts its toll and history as well as our daily papers record the crimes and wrecked lives of those who made pleasure and sensual satisfaction their aim in life.

## WE ALL WANT TO BE HAPPY

Everyone wants happiness. Isn't that what you are seeking? It's the way God made us. In the heart of every human being there is the yearning for peace and joy and happiness. Saints, as well as sinners, direct all their energies to their attainment. The saints, however, are the wise ones of this world for they have found the way that leads to genuine happiness. Many of them at one time had listened to the siren call of the world only to find, like St. Augustine of old, that "Thou has created me for Thee, O God, and my heart is restless until it rests in Thee." Others with the same innate desire for God fail to find Him because God seems to them so far away and they fail to look for Him where He can be found, even in our very midst.

Is it not unreasonable to think that God who made us so that one day we might share His own happiness, would remove Himself so far that we could not reach Him? Would Christ have died on a cross to prove His love and then withdrawn Himself from those for whom He died? God still loves us and wants to be near us. He said, "My delight is to be with the Children of men."

It is the nature of love that it tends toward union. If we love we want to be near the one loved. The highest expression

of human love is found in marriage where "two shall be in one flesh" (Mark 10:8). Intimate as is this love it is but a faint picture of the union which Christ wants with us His creatures. Not only does He call us friends, which means that we are of kindred minds, but because Christ is God, He found a way to be completely united with us and we with Him.

We have the infinitely great privilege to be united with Christ in a two-fold manner even while living here on earth. The one is in a spiritual way; the other in even a physical manner. The life which God breathed into Adam, the first human being, was God's own breath of life. That made Adam capable of one day living in heaven for he shared the very Life of God. By Adam's disobedience, that Life of God was lost. To restore this Life of God to man it was necessary for the Son of God to come down to earth in the person of Christ for He said: "I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly." That more abundant life was His own life which He came to share with us. The Son joined His Life to a human body and soul through the overshadowing by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary. Therefore in Christ there is the nature of God and also the nature of man which He took from his ever-blessed Mother.

And then, in order to share His life,

His life as God and His life as man, He instituted a most wonderful sacrament, namely Baptism, which is of water and the Holy Ghost. He called it a rebirth, the giving of another life which is the Life of God Himself. Through this sacrament we become so intimately united with God that we become the children of God, the heirs of heaven, yea even as Christ, the sons of God. St. John makes this plain when he tells us, "As many as received Him He gave them the power to be made the sons of God" (John 1:12). Over and over St. Paul speaks of this union by saying "We are members of Christ" or "We being many are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5). This union with Christ as Head, and we as members, is called the Mystical Body of Christ. It is the manner whereby, in a spiritual way, we are most intimately united with Christ.

Great and marvelous as is this union it still did not satisfy Christ. He wanted to unite Himself completely with His friends even more than when He was here on earth in the flesh. Christ is not only God, He is also man, with a human nature like unto our own. In His infinite wisdom, and by His Almighty power, He found the way whereby He would unite Himself with us in even a physical manner.

No human person could even have conceived a way whereby this physical

union between Jesus Christ and men could be accomplished. It was a daring idea and Our Lord knew that He had to prepare His hearers to accept the plan He had in mind. This plan was to give Himself as Food which we could consume so that He would be made one with us and we with Him. To prepare the way for his followers to believe His words, He first performed an astounding miracle with bread. With a few barley loaves and two fishes He fed 5,000, not counting the women and the children. You can imagine the reaction of the people. They wanted to make Him King on the spot. Instead Our Lord slipped out from among them. They found Him again the following day across the sea at Capharnaum, speaking in the synagogue. There He told us the plan whereby He would make Himself one with us, and we with Him.

By all manner of means read carefully the account given of this meeting in Capharnaum, as recorded by St. John in the 6th Chapter of his Gospel. First, our Lord made another reference to bread, the manna which had fallen from heaven on their forefathers. Though this bread came from heaven it did not preserve them from eternal death. Now, Our Lord proposed a bread which promised eternal life. "I am the living Bread," He said, "that has come down from heaven. If anyone eat of this Bread he shall live forever; and the Bread

that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:51-53). Then Christ stressed this idea still more by making this eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood a condition for life everlasting, for He said "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my Blood hath *life everlasting* and I will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:55-56).

### TEST OF FAITH

Here we have the real test of faith. Even some of Christ's own hearers were unwilling to accept His words. The miracle of the loaves they accepted though they did not understand. But they drew the line when it meant eating His flesh and drinking His blood. "How," they asked, "can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (John 6:53). Others said: "This is a hard saying and who can listen to it?" (John 6:62). Our Lord heard what they said. He saw them leaving Him. If He had meant His words to be taken only in a figurative manner, should He not have called them back and explained? Instead Christ affirmed what He had said, and in a manner which is the equivalent of an oath by saying "Amen, amen, I say to you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you" (John 5:52).

This then, my friends, is the test of our Christian faith. This is the doctrine

which the Catholic Church has held fast through the centuries. This is our belief today. Christ not only promised but He fulfilled His promise at the most solemn time of His life, the night before His death when He took Bread and blessed it and said: "Take ye and eat; this is My Body" (Matt. 26:26). Likewise with the Chalice, "This is My Blood of the new and eternal testament which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sin" (Matt. 26:28). And, then, so that the Apostles and their successors might continue what He had just done. He gave them the power to change bread and wine into His Sacred Body and Blood by saying, "Do this in commemoration of Me" (Luke 22:19).

### *SUBLIME WORDS OF CHRIST*

From generation to generation, down through 1900 long years, this power has been handed down so that in every Mass said throughout the world, the sublime words of Christ are used and Christ becomes actually and physically present upon our Catholic altars. And in the tabernacle upon the altar, Christ deigns to dwell, day and night, so that a Catholic church is in a most real sense a House of God where Christ dwells as God and as Man just as, in the long ago, He walked the earth in the country of Judea.

Allow me, then, to extend to you a



most cordial invitation to meet my Friend as He deigns to dwell in our Catholic churches. From His altar throne He welcomes each and everyone of us and He bids us come, especially if our hearts are heavy because so many conflicting voices today whisper "Here is Christ" (Matt. 24:23), or "Christ is in the inner chambers or in the desert" (Matt. 24:26). Christ as God and Man is found only upon our altars and to all He says: "Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy-burdened and I will give rest to your souls" (Matt. 11:28).

For those who have been brought up in an atmosphere of unbelief in Christ's Real Presence this doctrine is a "hard saying" even as it was for those who listened to Christ Himself. Why then do we believe? For no other reason than because Christ said so. It is the same reason why we believe every other doctrine which is contained in God's own Word, the Scriptures or the Bible.

As we enter a Catholic church we cannot help but notice that our eyes are attracted to the altar. It has an immediate appeal, for like a magnet it draws the heart of the seeker after Truth. And yet, how many stop at the threshold? Somehow all the weird stories and objections heard by so many come to the fore. Fear seems to clutch at their heartstrings and they hesitate to accept as true what our Lord said so plainly.

Many years ago when I was still a young priest, a very presentable young man came one day to the rectory. Though still young he had made a name for himself as an accomplished organist in one of the city theatres in the days of silent films. Somehow the flattery of his friends left him cold and he was seeking for inner peace. He hoped to find it in the Catholic Church. After a few instructions I took him to the church and we entered by the front door. As we walked down the long aisle he was rather hesitant and not until later did he confide his fears for he had been taught about secret doors that would open and engulf the unwary. Fortunately his fears were not lasting. Not only did he finish his instructions but later he studied and was ordained a priest. His former friends then came in great numbers to be instructed by him and all signs pointed to a fruitful and successful ministry. But God had other designs. In just three years God called Father Kinkade after a lingering illness.

### *IN GOD'S HOUSE*

As on that day of many years ago may I now tell you something of the House in which God dwells. I have already mentioned the altar. You will find it in every Catholic church for an altar is meant for sacrifice and it is upon the altar that the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered.

The Mass is the renewal, the continuation of the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. Here again our faith must come to our assistance, for only with the eyes of faith can we perceive the miracle of miracles which takes place when a priest stands at the altar. The Church, by means of various symbols, helps to bring home to us the reality, for above every altar there must always be a crucifix as a reminder that the Mass carries on in an unbloody manner the Sacrifice which Christ offered on the Cross. The altar is elevated to remind us of the hill of Calvary. The vestments of the priest are also reminders of Christ's Passion, for the long, flowing white garment called an alb, represents the fool's garment placed on Christ by Herod; the amice is a reminder of the cloth with which Christ was blindfolded; the cord around the waist the rope with which Christ was bound. Candles have ever been reminiscent of Christ as the Light of the World.

A look around the church further draws the mind to Christ and His sufferings, for in 14 pictures or sculptures the tragic journey of Christ is depicted from the judgment seat of Pilate to the summit of Calvary where Christ was nailed to the Cross.

On side altars and niches there are representations of the saints, those won-

drous heroes of Christ, beginning with Christ's ever Blessed Mother down to saints like the Little Flower and Pope St. Pius X, who lived in our own times. Stained glass windows depict other features, events in the life of Christ or Mysteries pertaining to our holy faith.

### *ALTAR IS FOCAL POINT*

The altar, however, remains the focal point, the heart and center of any Catholic church and the reason for the church. Everything in Catholic worship centers on the altar for an altar is meant for sacrifice and at the altar Christ renews each day the sacrifice He once offered on the Cross. Stretching back to the beginning of the human race sacrifice as an act of worship has been commanded by Almighty God. The very children of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, offered sacrifice. So did Moses and the high priests of the Old Law. These were in anticipation of and prefigured the one all-important sacrifice when Christ offered His own life upon a Cross.

This sacrifice was to remain until the end of time for as St. Paul tells us, "As often as you shall eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until He comes" (Cor. 11:26)—Christ made this possible when at the Last Supper He commanded His apostles to do what He had just done by saying: "Do this in commemoration of me" (Luke 22:19).

The Mass is divided into two parts: one called the Mass of the Catechumens, which in former times was attended by those who were under instruction to become Christians, and the Mass of the Faithful which originally could be attended only by those who had been baptized. Now, however, those of the faith, as well as all who are interested in the faith, can attend the entire Mass.

The Mass of the faithful is of a sublime character. It is divided into three parts—the Offertory, the Consecration and the Communion. As the priest offers the little white Host we are to offer ourselves to God as symbolized by the offering of the bread and wine. God accepts this offering as our tribute to Him. At the Consecration, what we have offered, as bread and wine, Christ, through the instrumentality of His priest, changes into His own sacred body and blood. And at Communion time God gives back to us what we have offered, no longer mere bread and wine but now Christ's flesh and blood.

In all the wide, wide world nothing could possibly bring home to us the infinite love which Christ has for us than this condescension on His part to come down upon the altar, to offer Himself for the remission of our sins and to give Himself to us completely, as God and as Man, as food for our souls.

Here, then, my dear friends, is where Christ deigns to dwell. Here we can visit Him as He resides on the altar; here it is that the Heart of Christ and the Christian can meet at the altar rail, Christ coming to us and we going to Him. In His infinite power as God, Christ could do no more to unite Himself with us more intimately. Christ does not show Himself to us in all His heavenly splendor, for that would take away the reward of faith. But we have His word, and by heeding it we make ourselves deserving of an eternal reward.

Come, then, and visit my Friend and yours in any of the more than 16,000 Catholic churches spread throughout the length and breadth of our fair land. Our doors are open wide and Christ, our Friend, holds court each day and night waiting for us to spend a little time with Him. Just a short visit and a little prayer, to assure Christ of our love, will be welcome. He would be particularly pleased were we to extend our visit to an hour for He said, "Could you not watch with Me one hour?" (Matt. 26:40). Come especially to Mass and try to grasp its hidden beauty and infinite value. You may not grasp its full significance all at once. Something so sublime as the Mass demands study and its beauty will unfold as your faith deepens and your love for Christ increases.

To help you in your search for truth,

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for peace of mind and joy to your soul, the priests of the Church are ever ready to help you. In most of our parishes regular classes are conducted to acquaint all with the joy with which our Catholic Faith abounds, or her priests will be happy to instruct you privately. They are Christ's friends and want you to be His friend. To all they say, "Come, meet my Friend."

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