

This Is My Friend

Friends tend to show up when things go wrong. They appear in the dark times, bringing us a card, a bunch of flowers, a meal. We recognise the depth of their friendship when we become aware of just how much they have given of themselves. Jesus is quoted by John as saying:

*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.
(John 15:13)*

At a time of crisis like the one we are now going through it is moving to see so many, particularly in the health profession, putting themselves at serious risk, for the sake of others. No wonder we come out onto our balconies at night clapping. At its best their action is a glimpse of the love of God. Paul puts it this way:

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8)

To develop the analogy: at Easter we come out not with the applause of our hands but with the worship of our hearts. We express our thanks for that young heroic life freely given over for the healing of our souls. We receive with joy the new life that is poured out on us through Jesus' glorious resurrection. And we delight in calling the young rabbi from Nazareth, our friend. We now have a friend in high places, seated in glory at the right hand of the living God. We have a friend at whose name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. To believe is to do no more than welcome him as friend.

*Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine;
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine.
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.*