One of the things that has been uplifting to me during this COVID-19 pandemic has been my good and faithful friends. Some examples: my high school classmate Kurt who lives in Old Lyme, CT who has called to chat about my homilies that he watched on our live-stream Masses; a group of college friends who shared a Zoom happy hour with me; another high school friend Beth of Portland, OR who called just to check on me and see how I was doing; a group of priest-friends have been texting and checking-in with each other almost daily, sharing ideas, fears, concerns, and funny stories to encourage one another; a group of friends from one of my former parish assignments have hosted semi-weekly Zoom dinners together. These are just some of the examples that I see God being present to me during these difficult days, examples of God’s love being shown to me through their care and affection for me, examples of faithful and faith-filled friends who challenge me to be the same for others.

One of my favorite passages in the Bible comes from the Book of Sirach in the Old Testament; it is part of the “wisdom literature”, and it deals with many things of daily life – education, poverty, wealth, religious worship, the law, as well as friendship. In chapter 6 of the Book of Sirach, the writer describes true friendship; here is the translation of Sirach 6:14-17 that I’ve had memorized since high school:

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter;

he who finds one finds a treasure.

A faithful friend is beyond price,

no sum can balance his worth.

A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy,

such as he who fears God finds;

for he who fears God behaves accordingly,

and his friend will be like himself.

As we enter the month of May, many Christians could talk about Mary, the mother of Jesus, being a faithful friend and a sturdy shelter for them in their lives; others could talk about a special devotion to a particular saint as being a source of strength and friendship in their lives.

Who have been some of your “faithful friends” in your life, those relationships that have helped show God’s love and God’s presence to you during the ups and downs of life?

Fr. Brad