

**SERMON OUTLINE FOR CONFIRMATION AT ST. MARTIN-IN-
THE-FIELDS, SUNDAY, 2ND JULY 2006**

Text: *Jesus said: 'I no longer call you servants, but friends' (St. John 15:15)*

The disciples had reached a turning point in their relationship with Jesus in that upper room the night before the crucifixion. Disciples and followers became committed friends of Jesus and therefore friends of God. Why? Not because they were particularly good people. Neither because they understood all of the teaching of Jesus. Those who are being confirmed will not suddenly become perfect overnight. Furthermore throughout history long before the saints became saints, they were sinners and they certainly did not reach perfection while still in this world.

Clearly they did not understand Christianity at that point in their discipleship – if indeed ever in this world. Peter had clearly got it wrong many times and would continue to do so in the future. No. You are not being confirmed because you understand Christianity. If you wait for that you never will be confirmed!

No you have reached a similar turning point in your journey of faith to that which those first timid disciples had reached. Remember the words of Jesus when he said: 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' Yes – in some way which you might find very difficult to put into words, **GOD HAS TOUCHED YOUR LIFE.** God has chosen you – and frankly God alone knows why!!

So that is why I shall lay my hands upon you as a sign of God's touch – as an outward and visible sign that God has touched you. And when God touches our lives it deepens our relationship with Him as he pours more and more of himself and of his Holy Spirit into our lives.

Of course I hope you have in your confirmation preparation learned a lot about the Bible; about prayer and worship; about the sacraments of the church; and about your duties as a Christian disciple to God and to your neighbour. All this is important. But now you have come to another essential turning point when God will draw you INTO love with Himself and empower you to live the life of His Kingdom where you work; where you live among your family and your friends.

Now of course this must appear as a tall order, as we say! You cannot hope to do this in your own strength, which is why you have come here today to receive the very life of God Himself in his Holy Spirit; to be rooted and grafted into God so that you can draw directly on his strength; his life and his love to enable you to live the life of a friend of Jesus and a friend of God from now onwards. You are literally putting your life into his hands – entrusting yourself to God and to the power of his Holy Spirit.

But if you are to put your life in his hands, you will need to take his life into your hands, which is what you will do when you make your communion, with hands extended in the form of a cross, and receive Jesus – the bread of Life – his own Body and Blood, so that as we say in the prayer, ‘We may evermore dwell in Him and He in us.’

Are you sure you really want to go ahead with this? The most important word on your lips today will be a very little word which is also one of the greatest words in our vocabulary. ‘Confirm O Lord, this your servant with your Holy Spirit.’ But then you will need to say for yourself that little word: AMEN. If you want to translate it into English it takes many forms: ‘So be it’: or in Latin: Fiat mihi; or in American ‘Right On!’ or in plain English ‘OK’ or just plain YES ! Yes, God I accept your invitation to be your close and intimate friend for life and for eternity, not because I’m good, or because I’ve earned it; or because I even understand totally what I am doing, but because you love me, you always have and you always will, with a love that will never let go of me. ‘Herein is love,’ says St. John, ‘not that we first loved God, but that he first loved us and gave himself to us.’

I finish with a little pulpit story to try to explain what I’m trying to say and what you are about to do. A little boy was playing on a cliff overlooking the sea. Nearby were two men who were collecting rare birds’ eggs. A particularly rare bird’s nest was on the edge of the cliff, just over the edge where the cliff a couple of hundred feet high went down to the sea.

The men did not feel able to climb down over the cliff edge to collect just one of the half dozen eggs in the nest. They approached the little boy and asked him if he would be willing to let them lower him on a rope down just a few feet over the cliff edge to get one of the eggs. The little boy looked at the cliff, down at the nest, at the rope, at the sea a couple of hundred feet below and finally up into the faces of the men. After a moment he replied: ‘OK yes, I’ll do it, SO LONG AS DADDY HOLDS THE ROPE!’

Daddy-Abba-Father. Our Father in heaven has got the whole world in his hands and he’s got you and me in his hands and providing we take Jesus into our hands and into our lives we will be in communion with God as a friend of God – hand in hand – whatever the risks and the difficulties, entrusting our lives to him as he gave his life for us. That is something very beautiful and very wonderful – in a word it is unconditional love for time and for eternity because from now onwards, Jesus calls you no longer just his servants but his friends, brothers and sisters and children of His Father and yours, for ever and for ever Amen.