



**DAILY SCRIPTURE & PRAYER RESOURCE for the
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
12 MAY – 19 MAY 2013**

DAY 5—THURSDAY 16 MAY

“Walking as the friends of Jesus”

Scripture Readings

Song of Solomon 1.5-8	Love and the beloved
Psalms 139.1-6	You have searched me out and known me
3 John 2-8	Hospitality to friends in Christ
John 15.12-17	I call you friends

“Walking as the friends of Jesus”

Today we reflect on the biblical images of human friendship and love as models for God’s love for every human being. Understanding ourselves as beloved friends of God has consequences for relationships within the community of Jesus. Within the Church, all barriers of exclusion are inconsistent within a community in which all are equally the beloved friends of Jesus.

Commentary:

To walk humbly with God does not mean walking alone. It means walking with those who are the vital signs of God’s presence among us, our friends. “But I have called you friends”, says Jesus in John’s Gospel. Within the freedom of love, we are able to choose our friends, and to be chosen as a friend. “You did not choose me, but I chose you”, Jesus says to each of us. Jesus’ friendship with each of us transfigures and transcends our relationships with family and society. It speaks of God’s deep and abiding love for us all.

The Bible’s love poem, the Song of Solomon, has been interpreted in various ways such as the love of God for Israel, or the love of Christ for the Church. It remains the testimony of passion between lovers which transcends the imposed boundaries of society. While the young woman says to the other women: “I am black and beautiful”, her words come with the plea: “Do not gaze at me because I am dark.” But her lover does gaze, and chooses love, as does God in Christ. Dalits know that when God gazes upon them it is with this same passionate love. When Christ says to Dalits: “I have called you friends”, it is a form of liberation from the inhumanity and injustice inflicted upon them by the caste system. In India today, it is a costly response for a Dalit to become a friend of Jesus.

What does the Lord require of those called to walk with Jesus and his friends? In India it is a call to the churches to embrace the Dalits as equal friends of their common friend. Such a call to be friends with the friends of Jesus is another way of understanding the unity of Christians for which we pray this week. Christians around the world are called to be friends with all those who struggle against discrimination and injustice. The walk towards Christian unity requires that we walk humbly with God with, and as, the friends of Jesus.

Questions for reflection/discussion

1. Who are the “Dalits” in Australian society today? In what ways are they disadvantaged, marginalized and discriminated against?
2. Who are those in your communities whom Christ calls into your friendship?
3. What makes it hard to be friends with others? What makes a friendship? What breaks one?
4. What prevents the friends of Jesus from being friends with one another?
5. How does being the friends of the same Jesus challenge the divided churches?

Prayer for the Day

Jesus, from the first moment of our being you offered us your friendship. Your love embraces all peoples, especially those who are excluded or rejected because of human constructions of caste, race, colour or background. Filled with the confidence and assurance of our dignity in you, may we walk in solidarity towards each other, and embrace each other in the Spirit, as children of God.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.



**National Council of
Churches in Australia**
Faith and Unity Commission