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Invitation to friendship

„Jesus of Nazareth“ by Joseph Ratzinger

Abstract

The trilogy of Joseph Ratzinger /Benedict XVI. is an invitation to friendship with Jesus. This invitation is inspired by faith: To become Jesus’ friend promised to become God’s friend. To portray Jesus as friend highlights a Christology of humanity which is characterized by the love of God, and it expresses a relation of great closeness, which is characterized by intimacy and respect.

This paper deals with the concept of friendship which is in the background of Ratzinger’s hermeneutic. The central reference is John 15:12-15. Here the ancient idea of friendship gains Christological substance from the context of the farewell which is open to a final welcome. The Johannine theology has the capacity both to establish vivid interest in the history of Jesus and to connect the personal faith with the community of believers, collected and taught by Jesus.

In his books, Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI. follows the logic of friendship: to spend time with Jesus, to be interested in his life and to participate in his truth. But he follows the logic of Christology as well: to search Jesus’ love by reading the Gospels as inspired memories and as creative actualizations of Jesus’ teaching. This is a decisive theological exegesis which invites the historic-critical Jesus research to review the philological analyses as well as the historical references, to clear up its own methodological presuppositions and to reflect its theological orientation.