

21 Acts 20 Heartfelt farewells to the brothers

One of the most moving scenes in the *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy occurs towards the end of the final film. Unbeknownst to Sam, Merry and Pippin, Frodo announces that he is to leave them and go into the West.

After the intensity of their adventures together, the realization of parting sparks spontaneous tears of lost friendship. The moment leads Gandalf to utter these words:

“Here at last, on the shores of the sea, comes the end of our Fellowship. I will not say, do not weep, for not all tears are an evil.”

Paul is about to leave his beloved fellowship in Ephesus. He won't see these people again in this world. Again, tears flow freely from broken hearts.

But sad as these scenes are, they are also incredibly hopeful. Paul's last words amount to a plea for them to keep the faith. If they stay true to it, then one day they will be reunited at Christ's return. Not all tears are evil: Paul would have agreed with Tolkien!

This scene challenges us to think deeply about how we live now as a Christian family. Are we living so lovingly together that the loss of a brother or sister instinctively issues in burning tears?

We are all certain to depart; the uncertainty surrounds whether we live in such a way together now, that our leaving will provoke the same good tears as did the farewell of Paul.