



Volume 5/Issue 12 - Christmas 2021

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The Family Apostolate

Where Faith and Family Meet

Emeka's Orphanage
Let's Do Something
Beautiful For God

God's Plan
For Friendship

Interview With
Chief David Harkins
In Service of
Church and State



THE JOY
of
Friendship

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A healthy family is the foundation for a holy society. The Family Apostolate seeks to provide the means of achieving this worthy goal through ministering to the family in spirit, mind and body. Spiritual growth through family prayer, devotion to the Holy Family of Nazareth, and regular reception of the sacraments feed the soul. Catechesis, evangelization, and spiritual reading provide a means of enhancing the mind. Marriage enrichment, retreats, and social outreach provide a bridge between the domestic and institutional church, nourishing the need for human connection and holy friendships. The Family Apostolate seeks to actively inspire hope and healing in family life.

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Do you have any questions
on
**faith, marriage, family,
or catechism?**

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Editorial

What are friends for?

The great American journalist, Walter Winchell wrote, "A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out." We all have needed this type of friend in our lives, mostly in the past year, someone to hold our hand and say, "it's fine, keep moving." We have needed a friend to tell us we're not crazy when our beliefs seem contrary to conventional views. We have needed someone to travel the rough path of faith, to spend time on our boring schedules, someone who accepts us just the way we are.

Life got lonelier with the global pandemic. Expectations changed. Individual and organizational disappointments characterized relationships with several feelings of losses. Human beings looked out for someone who would hold their hands and just walk with them. The word "friendship" is easy to use, but hard to live out since it embodies sacrifice. Jesus said to his disciples, "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (Jn. 15:15) He made known to them everything, not certain things, but everything, including his death and resurrection.

So, what are friends for? James, my little elementary school buddy, walked up to me and said, "You're my best friend." I laughed but at the same time, it challenged me. I barely knew James, but he called me his friend, and he meant it. Since then, he's worked to prove to me that he is my friend. He's asked his mom to arrange for me to visit him or have him visit me. He's asked for the type of food I like and what kind of things I love. James has made me reconsider my impression of friendship.

This edition of the Family Apostolate magazine challenges our notion of friendship. Who are your friends and how do you treat them? What constitutes joy in your friendship? Your common goals, desires, expectations, spiritual interests? Your friend might be expecting more from you. Is that different from your expectations? Maybe it's time to assess the value you put in your friendships and ask yourself if you are able to walk in when everyone else walks out. Such is the commitment and the joy of friendship.



**Wishing You And Your Family
A Merry Christmas & A Blessed New Year**

God's Plan For Friendship

Fr. Austin Murphy

*"Here we are, you and I, and I hope
that Christ makes a third with us."*

– St. Aelred of Rievaulx

The gift of friendship is truly one of life's treasures. When God looked upon the world that He had created, everything He saw was "good" – except one thing. One thing is said to be "not good" by the Lord as He looked upon Adam – a man who had been created in God's very image and likeness: "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). Everything that God had created perfectly reflected His will; but a solitary man, alone in the world, did not. Adam needed another in order to reflect the communion of life that God Himself enjoys in the Blessed Trinity. And so, God gives Adam a friend, Eve, and the two of them share a perfect friendship and communion of life, pursuing the same ends along with God. That is paradise.

We know how that story plays out. Yes, sin entered that world through the pride of Adam and Eve; and yes, relationships have not been perfect, and things fall apart. However, friendship remains a doorway into that communion of life that God wants for us; and holy friendships have a way of drawing us out of those things that keep us bogged down in selfishness and sin, making us better people. And not least of all, Christ's saving action has even redeemed friendship, making it a pathway to greater holiness and our own salvation.

When we look at friendships as something more than enjoying someone else's company, when we look at them in the light of our faith and our call to discipleship, then we begin to see the beauty of these relationships that transcend mere "attraction" – in fact, they become even more attractive because of the beauty of God that shines through them. I think of the friendship that is seen between Maurice Belliere and St. Therese of Lisieux. Maurice was a young French seminarian who was blessed to share a "pen pal" relationship with the Little Flower. The two never met in person, but they both shared a vocation in which they were striving to be conformed more and more to Jesus. As Maurice shared his own struggles and worries with Therese, she constantly responded with openness and compassion,

encouraging him and reminding him of Jesus' love for him. Maurice, miserable as he often was, was finally able to say to (and about) Therese, "Jesus is the treasure, but I found Him in you."

This is what a faith-based friendship is about – walking together and discovering Christ. These friendships can exist between anyone of faith; it does not matter if you are male or female nor if your friend is. What matters is a common pursuit of holiness – a vocation that all of the baptized share. In our world, these friendships are rare but so essential for transforming our society – they are necessary for authentic discipleship.

Too often, when a close friendship between two men is observed, there is an immediate desire to ascribe sexual overtones to it. Intimacy, in our society, is seen as simply an aspect of sexuality. However, intimacy is a basic human need – "programmed" into us by our Creator. If we are to model the life of the Holy Trinity, then intimacy is absolutely necessary. This can exist between men and women, women and women, and men and men, and it can raise each to a higher level of holiness.

So how can such friendships take root and thrive, especially in light of a society which so grossly misunderstands and distorts friendship?

First, we need to recapture the reality of what it means to be human – male and female. In order to relate to another person, we must be able to be true to ourselves. The phrase "be a man" is not just a call to some macho chest-thumping. Rather, it means to embrace that masculine side of our personality – honor, truth, commitment, self-reliance, stability. These are not always demonstrated by men, but they are part of an essential foundation for any solid relationship. The same is true for women and the feminine element of our shared humanity.

Second, there is a need to accept one another as they present themselves. There is so much falsehood in the world, it is no wonder we approach each other with hesitation and mistrust. However, friendship and love demand vulnerability and truth. Accepting the other as they are is a

tremendous act of love, and it can open a friendship that will bring both partners to a deep understanding of who we are called to be.

Finally, a faith-based friendship must involve Christ. Sharing our

"Accepting the other as they are is a tremendous act of love, and it can open a friendship that will bring both partners to a deep understanding of who we are called to be."

knowledge of and love for Jesus is what brings people of faith together. Everyone has their own unique relationship with the Lord, and the journey of discipleship is learning to appreciate those differences and supporting each other in them.

St. Aelred of Rievaulx, whom I quoted at the beginning of this article, and known for his spiritual classic *On Spiritual Friendship*, speaks of friendship as a gateway to Christ. He relates various conversations he has had with fellow monks in his monastery, and in them we get a glimpse of Aelred's love for Jesus, which he delights in sharing with the brother monks. He sometimes uses rather intimate language, and yet all along we are aware that this is a burning fire of love for Christ – Aelred cannot help but speak of Jesus! That is discipleship, and the friendships that he cultivates are ways of deepening and sharing that love.



Fr. Austin was born and raised in Baltimore, growing up in Catonsville – the oldest of four. After high school at Mt. St. Joseph, he attended UMBC, and eventually responded to God's call to priesthood. He studied philosophy at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore before heading to Rome to study theology at the North American College. He was ordained a priest in 2003 and has worked as an associate pastor, college chaplain, vocations director, and pastor. Fr. Austin has been pastor at Christ the King in Glen Burnie since July, 2019.



Think of a time when you have been able to sit with someone whom you trust and speak about your own spiritual life. Think of how energized you were as the person listened and perhaps shared their own experience. There is a flame that seems to ignite in those moments, and that is the seed of a spiritual friendship. It should be natural for a Christian to share these sorts of conversations, but these friendships are precious and rare. A good marriage is rooted in such a friendship, because in it, all defenses drop and a soul is laid bare – there is nothing more intimate for a couple.

Our Church ought to be a place where these spiritual friendships sprout and thrive. As a parish, the opportunity for these spiritual conversations, faith sharing, and growth in our knowledge and love of Christ should be a priority. The gift of friendship is one of life's treasures. As Adam finally looked upon Eve in the Garden, he rejoiced to have someone to share his life with – someone who was an equal, who could listen and respond in kind. This is the model of all human relationships. It is what God intends, and it is good.

God's plan for friendship can be related back to His gracious action of salvation. In these relationships we find the key to uniting ourselves more closely with the Spirit, the Son, and the Father. In a faith-based friendship the partners not only discover one another; they discover God.

Archbishop William Lori and Fr. Austin Murphy embrace after Fr. Murphy's installation as Pastor of Christ the King Parish, Dec 15, 2019

Finding Authentic Friendship In God

Ali Ghaffari

I first laid eyes on him in the dining hall at Colby College the summer between my sophomore and junior years. He was in his forties, with tightly cropped brown hair, wire-rimmed glasses covering intense eyes, a wiry but strong frame, and a very intelligent, deliberate and intensely attentive way about him. His name was Steven – not Steve, but Steven. And Steven changed my life through his friendship.

It began with him offering to give me a golf lesson out on the driving range. I eagerly accepted. I was terrible at golf, and alternated hitting “worm-burners” and slices, but Steven believed in me. So much so that he even bet money with a neighboring golfer that I would hit a straight shot. He lost his five dollars. Our friendship grew as we played chess every day and talked about life. A graduate of the Naval Academy, he spent time as an officer in the Navy SEALs before getting out and having the Army send him through medical school to become an Ophthalmologist. After completing medical school, he received additional training at Colby as part of a summer program. He was married and at that time had one son whom he adored. Steven was both smart and tough. I loved him and hung onto every word he said.

One day Steven asked me where I stood on faith. When we met, I was an agnostic on my best days and an atheist on my worst. Steven had once been in my shoes, but he relayed to me the story of his conversion – led by the powerful example of a fellow Navy colleague who lived unlike anyone else he had met. Curious about what was leading this man to live such a different life, Steven asked his colleague. The answer was Jesus Christ. This led Steven to a year of searching. He read the Bible and spent many hours in study, emerging with a strong faith in God himself.

With our solid friendship as a base, and my deep respect for Steven, I now had to ask myself the hard questions I had been eluding for years. Do I believe God exists? If God exists, what might that mean for the choices I was making in my life? What might that mean for the choices I had yet to make? How ought I live my life? This man whom I deeply respected asked himself these same questions and came up with very different answers than I was currently holding. It was

time for me to reexamine these seriously and align my life with what emerged. Our conversations progressed and he learned that I was interested in becoming a doctor. He suggested I follow his path and have the military pay for medical school. I followed his advice the next year, but when I walked into the recruiter's office I came face to face with an image of an F/A-18 fighter jet. At that moment, I realized I was going to medical school for the wrong



Paul and Ali

reasons. Those were my parents' dreams for me. My childhood dream of becoming a pilot had been lost, but now was found. Three years later, I achieved my dream and became a fighter pilot, flying that same F/A-18 I saw on the poster. This never would have happened without Steven's friendship

Around this same time in my life, a second friendship emerged with a male mentor about Steven's age. His name was Paul, and he was our neighbor and my dad's friend. Paul had been a bodybuilder, a Navy Corpsman stationed with Marines, and had long, flowing brown hair like some 80's male model. He was loud and tough. One night that same summer, Paul and my dad were sitting out on the porch of our Vermont duplex overlooking a green valley and rolling hills. They were drinking beers and talking. I cherished these times, as my dad was a man of few words. Yet with a beer in hand and a friend, he would open up, and I'd get to hear what was on his mind.

This was one of those nights and I sat down, content to be a fly on the wall. Before long, however, the conversation turned to me. Paul, who had barely graduated high school and yet a successful self-made businessman, asked me what I was doing that summer. I responded to Paul's question with an air of superiority, relaying that I was doing Organic Chemistry research at college. He pressed me to describe it further. I responded that it was chemistry that involved molecules called carbenes. He asked me again to explain what those were. But that was really about the end of my knowledge base.

Like the title of Shel Silverstein's book, this is “where the sidewalk ended.” A measly three questions in. Here, at this moment, I realized that while I could “play the game” – stuff into short-term memory what I needed to know for the test, ace the test, then promptly forget what I learned – I did not really understand many things. My knowledge was a mile wide and an inch deep, and the things I knew were the most basic level of knowledge – discrete facts. I was unable to build connections or even to take it further to make it my own. The walls on this little world I had created where I was God, came tumbling down.



When this became clear to Paul, he said, “I could have come here to throw rocks at you, but I actually want to throw you a rope. Do you believe in God?” Shocked by this sudden turn, I replied, “No – there's no evidence for His existence.” Paul said, “The evidence is all around us – you simply need eyes to see it.” Our conversation went on into the night, and I spent months digesting it as I went on a semester abroad program to

“**I threw every objection to the Catholic Church I had against him ... he deflected them like a Jedi master.**”

London, which was both a highlight and lowlight of my life. Certainly, being in London and traveling every weekend was amazing. At the same time, I wrestled day in and day out trying to figure out who I was and who I wanted to be. I felt quite depressed by it all – coming to the realization that while I thought I had life figured out, I did not have a clue.

The following winter, I returned home from London and Paul and I got together. Seeing

my sagging body language and depressed state, he told me to stand up straight and then hammered into me that I had value – that I would be someone amazing someday. We talked more about God and played chess and he hired me the following summer for his historical restoration business. Our conversations continued high above the streets of Burlington as we chipped away both old brick mortar, and my resistance to God.

The following year, after I graduated from Officer Candidate School, Paul called to check on me and we started an email conversation about faith. He asked me where I was with it all. I replied that I had planned to visit all of the churches in town and I would become a member of the one I liked the most. He said, “Whoa! Should the Truth conform to us, or should we conform ourselves to the Truth?” I reluctantly said that we should conform ourselves to the Truth. Paul replied that I ought to figure out what the Truth was first, and then follow it.

Here was my problem – Paul was Catholic and my family was Methodist. If I was going to be anything, it was going to be Methodist. I had zero desire to be Catholic. I resolved to learn more about the Catholic faith than Paul so I could pull the rug out from under him. Little did I realize that Paul had been steadily reading AND understanding Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas for the previous five years. I did not stand a chance!

But we wrestled and debated over the next six months as I threw every objection to the Catholic Church I had against him. He would calmly turn it aside every time with history, logic, and scripture. I grew frustrated and went to my friends and family for anything they had against Catholics. I threw those things at him and again he deflected them like a Jedi master. Exhausted, I asked him to teach me. This he did by beginning with some of the Classics. We began with Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. We worked our way through the Church Fathers, through Newman, Belloc, Chesterton, and Tolkien. Before I was done, I was convinced I needed to become Catholic. I became Catholic the following Easter. This marked the turning point to where I am today, a committed and convinced family man, strong in my faith, thanks to the friendship with Paul. God makes all the difference.

The friendship of these two men, Steven and Paul, changed my life and set me on a trajectory where I wanted to spend my life in service to God and to bring others to Him, so they could experience the joy and freedom it brought to me. My time in the Navy as a fighter pilot prepared me to be a capable and resilient leader. My conversion through the classics sharpened my intellect and formed a strong foundation for my Catholic faith. Nearly two decades later, all of this culminated in me founding Divine Mercy

Academy, a classical liberal arts school in the Catholic tradition, where our students not only meet and converse with the greatest authors of Western Civilization, but they also meet Jesus Christ in prayer, in the Sacraments and in the hearts of our amazing and dedicated tutors. It is awesome what good friendship can do.



Ali Ghaffari is a convert to the Catholic faith. He and his wife Mary have five children ranging in age from 3 to 13. He recently retired after 20 years in the Navy, the first fifteen spent flying various aircraft, to include the F/A-18 and T-45C, the last five teaching leadership and ethics to faculty, staff, coaches, and midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy. He is the Founder and President of Divine Mercy Academy, a K-8 Classical school in the Catholic tradition. He is also the President of The Frassati Company, a leadership coaching and consulting firm which operates in the spirit of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. He has Master's degrees in Theology and Philosophy from Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, CT. He loves to write and speak about the Catholic faith.

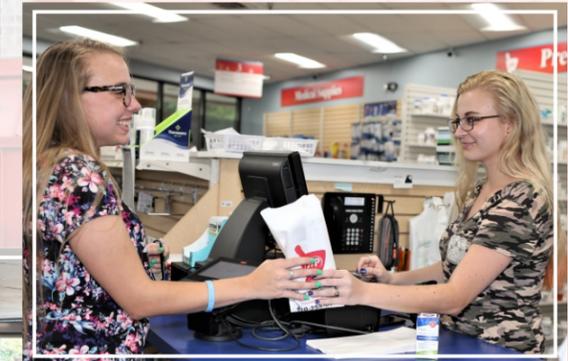


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CASTING INTO THE DEEP

...a sacramental friendship with Christ

Fr. Michael DeAscanis

"It is the hour of the week I most look forward to," so said a woman recently who signed up for a weekly hour of adoration. Every week she goes to pray for an hour in a chapel and sits face to face with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. She said that it calms her down; that she feels the closeness of God; that she feels Jesus gazing into her soul; that it encourages and affirms her. She knows it is Him because she feels His presence and His friendship. It is subtle but real.

As a Catholic priest, every morning I begin by praying in front of the tabernacle in my rectory chapel. And every night, at the end of the day, I return to pray in front of the tabernacle. I too feel the closeness of Jesus, and His encouragement, friendship, and guidance.

It is good to have friends. We like to be liked. But we struggle with friendship in today's culture. We increasingly communicate with each other by digital means rather than in person. This summer I saw four teenage boys sitting on the beach together, but each was texting other friends. Here they were with their friends, but instead of talking to those friends, they were texting other friends. It made no sense. Probably, if they had gone to see their other friends, then they would have begun texting their friends back on the beach!

We are meant for friendship. As humans, we all want to be affirmed by others, and to be considered valuable and likeable. But human friendship is incomplete and imperfect. Our value is not always recognized by others. And human friendships are often temporary. Even the intimate friendship of marriage occasionally ends in separation. Is it possible to have a pure and lasting friendship?



Yes, with Jesus. Jesus is God who came to earth. The Creator came to spend time with the creatures. And He came in a visible body, and He spoke audible words. He was relatable. And He said that He doesn't consider us to be servants, but rather friends. *You are my friends . . . It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you.* (John 15:13-16)

He chose one of us to be His mother, Mary. He had deep affection for her. He called another of us to provide for Him, Joseph. He chose twelve men to be His close circle of friends, the apostles. He drew women into His circle of disciples, including Mary Magdalene. And He desires friendship with each of us.

Is it possible to know God at such a personal level that you can call Him "friend?" Is it possible to relate to Him? Yes, we can relate to God through Jesus, who is God. We still have His visible, physical presence in the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is Jesus. In every Mass, bread changes into Jesus.

Let's consider the words of three saints who had great friendship with Jesus through the Holy Eucharist.

St John Vianney, a parish priest in the 1800s in France, was a great lover of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. He is the patron of parish priests. He felt drawn to spend time each day in prayer by the tabernacle. He would say:

"He is the one who has loved us so much; why shouldn't we love him in return? . . . You do not need many words when you pray. We believe that the good God is there in the tabernacle; we open our souls to Him and feel happy that he allows us to come before him; this is the best way to pray."

St. Damien de Veuster, a missionary priest in Hawaii in the 1800s, also found deep friendship with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. At age 38 he agreed to be quarantined for the rest of his life on the Hawaiian island of Molokai, to minister to lepers. He himself eventually died of the disease eleven years later. Damien said that it was his prayer before the tabernacle that sustained him in

this often lonely ministry: *I find my consolation in the one and only Companion who will never leave me, that is, our divine Savior in the Holy Eucharist. . . It is at the foot of the altar that we find the strength necessary in this isolation of ours. . . Were it not for the constant presence of our Divine Master in our humble chapel, I would not have found it possible to persevere in sharing the lot of the lepers in Molokai. . . Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the most tender of friends.*

Charles de Foucauld, a French monk who lived as a hermit among the Muslims in Algeria in the early 1900s, also found consolation from Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. He wrote:

Lord Jesus, You are in the Holy Eucharist. You are there, a yard away in the tabernacle. Your body, your soul, your human nature, your divinity, your whole being is there, in its twofold nature. How close you are, my God, my Savior, my Jesus, my brother!

You were not closer to the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph in the cave at Bethlehem or the house at Nazareth or during the flight into Egypt, or at any moment of that divine family life than you are to me at this moment and so many others – in the tabernacle. . . . You were no nearer to your apostles when you were sitting in the midst of them than you are to me now, my God. How blessed I am!

These three great priests, who gave their lives to God, embracing celibacy, and poverty, and hard work, found a friend to encourage and sustain them – Jesus in the Eucharist. You can't fake that!

So, get to know Jesus! You cannot love someone you do not know. A simple prayer is, "Lord, help me to know you better."

Know Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. At every Mass bread changes into Jesus; the visible presence of God here with us. Admittedly, it is strange that God who is infinite can become visible in a finite substance. He did so in a Jewish baby in Bethlehem; He did so in the unleavened bread at the Last Supper; and He does so in the host at every Catholic Mass. Strange, but wonderfully true!

Get to know Him by spending time with Him. Go sit before the tabernacle or in adoration, looking upon Him quietly, speaking to Him from your heart, listening to Him in your thoughts, and reading His words in the Gospel. In this way, little by little, you will start to recognize Him in the host, you will start to feel His promptings and to recognize His voice in your thoughts. *By visiting our Lord we learn something not found in books, for love is born and grows through personal association. Consider those who love each other. Present together, their eyes say everything, almost without a need for words. "He looks at me and I look at Him,"* [Norms of Piety, J. M. Muntadas, Scepter Publishers, p. 15, 2017]

During my time in seminary, we once had a Catholic psychologist speak to the Baltimore seminarians. He encouraged us to spend time in prayer before the tabernacle each day. He said, "Men, you give up friendship with a wife for deeper friendship with Christ. So spend time with Him!"

Make time for prayer each week before Jesus in the Holy Eucharist in church. As Bishop Fulton Sheen remarked, spending an hour with Jesus is the only thing relating to Himself that he specifically asked of us, when he said to the apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane: *"Could you not watch one hour with me?"* (Matthew 26:40).

Stop into church on the way to work or school or on the way home. Some churches are open all day. Others are open daily for Mass. Research your local

churches to see what hours they are open. Stop in when there is adoration in church. Get to Sunday Mass early or stay afterwards for some time of private prayer.

Some people say, "I don't believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. I don't believe that bread changes into God." Well, many others do believe it. We believe it because Jesus said so (John 6:51-57), but also because we have experienced it. We experience God and his goodness when praying before the Holy Eucharist. He gives us thoughts and ideas. He encourages and challenges and guides us. Maybe you haven't had this experience yet, but we hope that one day you will! Then like the woman who signed up for adoration you too can say, "It is the hour of the week I most look forward to!"



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Fr. Michael DeAscanis is a priest of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, ordained in 2004. His seminary studies specialized in bioethics and medical ethics. He currently serves as pastor of St. Louis Catholic Church, Clarksville and St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Community, Fulton. He also serves as chaplain of the Catholic Medical Association in Baltimore, giving spiritual and ethical support to physicians and medical students. Fr. DeAscanis writes for the FA Magazine on Theology and the Sacraments

God walks us back to heal what was broken.

Ruth Popp

The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. (Matthew 13:31-32)

The strong tree described by Jesus reminds me of the Christian families I have known that have become centers of faith, shelter, and belonging. Catholic family life is a web of friendships characterized by the love and grace of God pouring into a daily encounter with both the nobility and folly of human nature. The strength of this friendship-web depends upon the strength of the one friendship each family member has with our Lord, often most notably the patriarch and matriarch of the clan. Our ability to be truly present with ourselves and others reflects the reality of our first friendship. In His love, we stop hiding and get real.

Sparks fly when many people are on this “getting real” journey together! I remember when my four-year-old daughter Naomi blabbed to Uncle Bob that six-year-old Frances had a crush on David Rodriguez. Five minutes earlier Naomi had sworn she would never reveal the secret. Did Frances forgive Naomi? Yes. Still, Frances wisely waited two years before sharing another secret with her. That long, painful wait was a character forming gift to Naomi. While their basic breach of trust healed, I think many of us have in mind a deeper betrayal that takes our breath away.

How do we respond to profound trauma? We are all tempted at times to kick someone out of the family tree or flee it ourselves! Deep wounding impacts everything – our relationship with the betrayer (How could you do that to me?), our relationship with ourselves (Did I deserve this?), and ultimately, and most importantly, our relationship with the Lord (Where were You, Lord?). Sometimes we must admit that a significant family friendship has failed. We step into the dark, and our friendship with God is tried. Os Guinness wrote that “faith is better tested in crises than in creeds, in failure, rather than success.”¹ It is in the dark valley where we discover how deeply we really believe in God’s goodness and his tender personal care. We make a decision to withdraw or to engage the struggle. Sometimes, key parts of that decision are made for us, either because someone walks away, or because we must remove ourselves and our children from danger.

Over the years, I have noticed that when family relationships fail, the fault lines often echo past hurts of the people involved. I have wondered, “Lord, why does this theme repeat in my life?” I have come to believe that God walks us back into similar places and circumstances to heal what was broken in a like-place. Think of

Jesus sitting before a charcoal fire asking Peter three times if Peter loved Him. Jesus was walking Peter into the memory of another night when Peter denied his friendship with Jesus three times while warming himself by another charcoal fire. In recovery circles the phrase, “if you can feel it, you can heal it,” is often repeated. Recent discoveries in neuroscience confirm this understanding. We now know that trauma is “written” into the structure of our brains where connections can be damaged, severed, or never built in the first place due to traumatic experiences from which we have not recovered. To establish, reconnect, or remap healthy connections in the brain, the affected area must be reactivated. This re-activation, while excruciatingly painful, presents an opportunity for a deep healing. We find this healing as we walk the road of broken friendship. Jesus leads us on this journey and teaches valuable lessons along the way.

Lesson number one is that in my encounter with the Lord, I must show up, all the way, for real. God doesn’t love the person I think I should be. He loves the person I really am. In his retelling of an ancient myth, C.S. Lewis describes this necessary exposure of our hearts, “the speech which has lain at the center of your soul for years, which . . . you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over.”⁴ We tend to hide these words, even from ourselves. Yet, until these words can be, “dug out of us,”⁵ we cannot stand honestly before God. I have learned to allow myself to feel the suffering and to cry, scream, lament, weep, rage, and rock myself back and forth. This is the naked truth of my response to suffering. I usually do this in my car in a remote parking lot. I speak the questions that clog my heart, “Where were You, Lord? Wasn’t I faithful to You? If You love me, why would You let this happen?” As I pour out my heart, I discover in myself the elder brother of the prodigal son, imagining myself to have been underpaid for my long service. I discover a shallowness in me, clinging to the “Prosperity Gospel,” which sells the lie that good things will always happen to good people. I encounter my bitter accusation that in allowing profound suffering, God has failed me.

Lesson number two is that Jesus always responds when we speak to Him from our true heart. Once my agony is spent, I encounter the Lord of comfort. He knows. He scoops me up and does the rocking for me. I am a child of God, always a child. He touches my raw pain with love and tells me where He was. He was hanging on the cross for me. He was suffering with me or alongside my loved one. He inspires me and guides me. He tells me that my struggle is precious to Him. He leads me to find wisdom and help from many different

“ **I have come to believe that God walks us back into similar places and circumstances in order to heal what was broken in a like-place.** ”

sources including the Scriptures, other books, people, spiritual directors, and therapy. I don’t always get the answers I want, but I get love and enough light to find my next baby step forward.

Lesson three is that in humility I find the strength to forgive. The Lord’s loving presence turns up the lights in my heart. I see that I have betrayed Jesus as much as I have ever been betrayed. I have rejected Him, abandoned Him, blamed Him, ignored Him, stood by silently as others disrespected Him, and desired what I could get from Him more than I desired Jesus, Himself. He has suffered more because of me than I have suffered for anyone else. This awareness is sobering to me. I realize it

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5. Oswald Chambers, *The Love of God: An Intimate Look at the Father-Heart of God*, p. ___?



Ruth Popp is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy. She and her husband Tom have five daughters ranging in age from 14 to 28 years old. She has written Bible study materials for women through Walking With Purpose, Inc. A veteran homeschooler of 21 years, she served as the Director and President of the Board of St. Thomas Aquinas Tutorial and the first Director of Development for the CLT, the new standard for college entrance exams. Ruth loves to encounter, write about, and speak about God’s patient and personal love.

is no great thing on my part to forgive. I am in desperate need of the very forgiveness I am tempted to withhold. Again, I understand myself as a sinner in constant need of God’s mercy, no better than anyone, unworthy and yet chosen anyway.

Lesson four is that forgiveness does not equal reconciliation. I can forgive someone who isn’t even sorry. Then I am free to close down the courtroom of my mind and stop prosecuting them. I can focus on setting appropriate boundaries and carrying my cross without breaking my lifeline to Jesus. I can live in His love even if my family member continues to reject me or behave in hurtful ways. Sometimes we are called to remain in a place of unanswered yearning for years, decades, or even a lifetime. What is impossible for man is possible for God. He will sustain us in the awkward “not-yet” space between this life and heaven. So long as we draw breath, the possibility of restoration remains open. When those who harm us confess and repent, we can begin the work of reconciliation together.

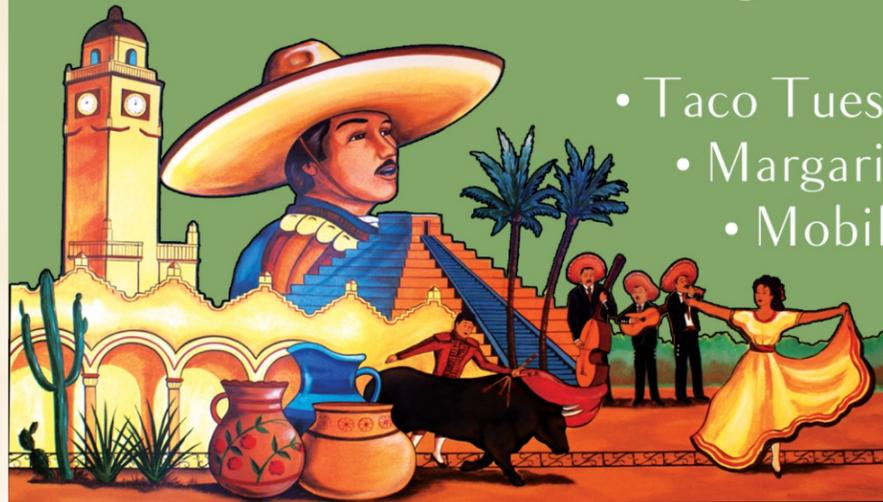
The constellation of friendships within our families thrives when we stay in the lifegiving cycle of repentance and communion before God. “Drink deep and full of the love of God and you will not demand the impossible from earth’s loves; then the love of wife and child, of husband and friend will grow holier and healthier and simpler and grander.”⁶ The strength of our friendships ever reflect the depth of our connection to God. His love enables us to step out of hiding to walk in the brokenness and beauty of our shared humanity. In that state of grace, from whichever branch we inhabit in the family tree, we can join the song.

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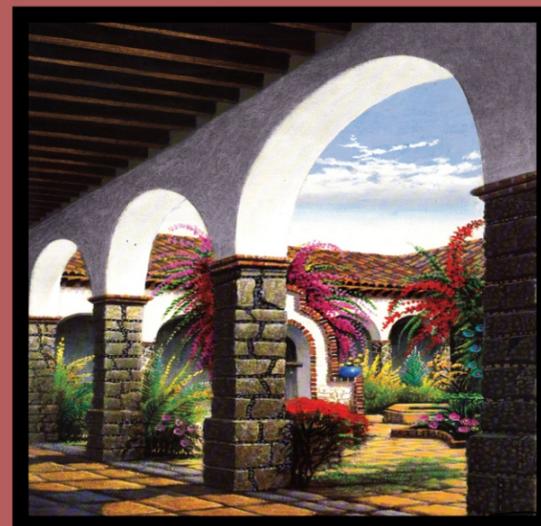
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How FRIENDSHIP Impacts Our Well-Being

Christine Doty

Over the years there have been people who have come into my life for a season and then drifted away. We still like each other and are happy to chat if we run into each other but we no longer seek each other out. There are some longer-term friendships that developed around common interests or because we spent so much time together at children's activities. A few of these have become dear friends. Then there is the Buffalo. Let me explain. While texting my closest friend, autocorrect changed BFF to Buffalo and a nickname was born. My friendship with Buffalo was built as we raised our children, grew in our marriages, grew in our faith, and supported each other through hardship. This type of friendship is rare. According to some researchers, 70% of our close friendships will dissolve within 7 years.

The connection between friendship and

well-being has been recognized and researched for quite some time. Fulfilling relationships play a major role in people's

“Good friends keep us grounded and help us cope during difficult times, give us purpose and a sense of belonging and increase our happiness”

physical and emotional well-being. Good friends keep us grounded and help us cope during difficult times, give us purpose and a sense of belonging and increase our happiness. Our friendships can also affect

us in negative ways. If a friend consistently brushes off your problems or ignores you when you need help, or gossips about you and puts you down, you can end up feeling alone and anxious instead of supported.

The COVID19 pandemic caused painful isolation and loneliness for many as we were separated from those we care about. Friendships may have faded and as we are able to have more contact, we may discover that the connection we had is not the same. At the same time, some of your friendships may have deepened, creating closer bonds. You may have been presented with new opportunities to make connections with people in your own backyard as the pace of life slowed. These experiences, both positive and negative, have reminded us of the importance of other people in our lives.

Now that our lives have been interrupted,

we have an opportunity to take stock and make adjustments that will help us live fuller, healthier, happier lives. One key area to examine is our friendships. And I suggest this examination not just to make sure we have a strong, stable support system to get us through the tough times, but also to ask ourselves – How am I doing? Are there ways that I can be a better friend? Following are some suggestions for improving your friendships by making sure you are showing up.

- Be willing to voice your own feelings and perspectives from a place of humility and kindness.
- Be trustworthy. Keep your commitments.
- Be trusting. The other side of this coin is that you must be willing to put your trust in your friends. We feel good when others are able and willing to trust us. In a world where it is easy to always focus on the bad, be a shining light pointing to the good in people.
- Be willing to go the extra mile for a friend and learn to put yourself in their shoes.
- Be present and an active listener.
- Be flexible. Don't assume that your way is always the "right" way.
- Be a friend that celebrates with others. Let go of jealousy and resentment when others do well.
- Be forgiving. Your friends will let you down sometimes. You will let your friends down sometimes.

When we work on being better friends our friendships grow into strong, stable connections that give us joy in the good times and sustain us in the hard times. God created us for a committed relationship with Him and for connection with other people. Godly friendship is built on encouragement (1 Thessalonians 5:11), forgiveness (Colossians 3:13), connection (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10), kindness (Job 42:10), honor (Romans 12:10), and love (1 Peter 4:8-10). The checklist above is the practical expression of these qualities.

So, make that call you've been putting off, invite the new family in the neighborhood



for dinner, check in with your friend that is struggling, go to the birthday party. No matter what is happening, God has given us the gift of friendship to bring us joy and sustain us.

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Christine Greiner Doty works as an outpatient therapist to children, adolescents, and adults. She has also worked as a child advocate in the court systems, with women in need of housing and with victims of domestic violence.

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Emeka's Orphanage House Team



Inspired by their love for God, The Family Apostolate Orphanage team is planning the building of Emeka's Orphanage House. They are casting into the deep to make a difference in the lives of children who are orphaned more than 6,000 miles away. Within two months, they shipped four large boxes of goods to Nigeria for Christmas which demonstrates the generosity of American donors. What a grace! What a beautiful journey, to shelter the homeless through Emeka's Orphanage House project.

To be a part of this mission, contact us at familyapostolate.com or email us at familypriestfiles@gmail.com.

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WE THANK ALL THOSE WHO DONATED ITEMS AND MONEY TO HELP SEND CHRISTMAS ITEMS TO OUR ORPHANAGE IN NIGERIA. KINDLY KNOW THAT WE'LL BE COLLECTING AGAIN FOR EASTER. MAY GOD BLESS YOU.

Emeka's ORPHANAGE:

Let's Do Something Beautiful

For God

Fr. Vincent Arisukwu



The desire for friendship is innate in humans. For this reason, our natural inclination is to seek connection. We long for affection, affirmation, closeness, and support. We shy away from anything/anyone who devalues us - bullies, haters, and enemies. Healthy friendships grow organically and God certainly leads us to them. Do you normally anticipate who your friend will be? No. We are born into our families and introduced to our relatives but no one introduces you to your friends saying, "Now this person is your friend." We connect with our friends because they make us feel good. Think about Christ's statement to His disciples, "Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (Jn. 15:15) We feel good with Christ because we know He is our friend.

Friendship is about appreciation, acceptance, and commitment, and just as important, about sacrifice. Consider the friendship between Jonathan and David in the scriptures and you will gain a deeper understanding of the demands of friendship. Jonathan epitomized royalty while David was a poor shepherd. Jonathan demonstrated commitment to David in an unflinching manner, "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt." (1 Sam. 18:4) Mark these words: "stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David." That is friendship, stripping oneself of royalty for the sake of one's friend. David seemed the most unlikely friend for Jonathan at the time because of his low social status. He possessed nothing that could be offered in return, yet Jonathan remained faithful.

What is striking for me is the connection with my little friends at the orphanage: Joseph, Trinitas, Michael, Clinton, Osawese, Marilyn. Something happened between us which seemed unlikely, may not exactly be like Jonathan and David's, but that's friendship. What can a busy priest possibly do for children who are orphaned and handicapped? Well, God arranged the meeting with my unlikely little friends, and like David, the orphans have nothing to pay back materially; they are completely at the mercy of others. Just as faith and family



are building blocks of a healthy, holy society, love and sacrifice form the core of friendship.

I had a cousin, Emeka, who was born blind. I still feel pain in my heart as I remember him. Emeka would sit dejectedly by himself all day. Emeka had a twin sister, who was treated quite differently. My uncle and aunt did not seem to find Emeka worthy of the same love as their other children since they had no physical disabilities. Emeka was different. Each time we visited my uncle's house, Emeka sat beside the fireplace, rarely talked to anyone, and rarely had company. He was lonely and unkempt. My siblings and I would call the attention of the parents who would pretend he was fine. Sometimes, we would create some fun for Emeka but those were brief moments, then we went back to our house. Unfortunately, the system in Nigeria is not the same as in the U.S. and

other developed countries, otherwise the attention of Child Protective Services would have been drawn to Emeka's condition. Eventually, Emeka became so invisible that no one is sure what exactly happened to him. Handicapped kids are often treated like Emeka, or even worse, in many parts of the world. They barely experience friendship; unfortunately, they are perceived as burdens. Imagine being alone in the world, feeling rejected by your loved ones. Imagine such a feeling of isolation. I wish I could have been Emeka's friend.

Handicapped kids in orphanages are mostly little ones abandoned by their parents. I have asked myself why a mother would throw away her baby after delivery. Why would a mother abandon her toddler and run away? What would such a mother be thinking as she moves on with her life wherever she is? Does she not remember her little one? One explanation could be the

possibility of terrible interior wounds. Perhaps she grew up in an environment defined by dysfunction. Perhaps she was abused. Whatever the reason, such a mother is inhibited from experiencing the profound blessings of motherhood. God's promise is this, "Even though a mother may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands." (Is. 49:15-16) I believe that God is using us to remember these kids in the orphanage.

In my fifteen years of priesthood, I have always had a dream to bridge faith and family life. As I live the beautiful, winding road of my vocation, I have this hunger, as Mother Teresa would encourage, to do just a little more. I founded the Family Apostolate for the love of family life, to help give meaning to the lives of people like Emeka, to do "just a little more." Reflecting on my homeland, I see little or no hope for

most disabled people in Africa. For instance, the kids in the orphanage have no electricity, no running water, no refrigerator and only the most basic food. They often lack needed medication. Most of them have never watched television. Those who are unable to walk have no wheelchairs. They lack simple toys to play with. The government rarely cares for them. We have to do just a little more on our own in a sacrificial way. We must help these kids find friendship in the world.

Christ says in the scripture, "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, that you do unto me." (Mt. 25:40) Giving new life to these kids is in my heart. Providing material support and bringing smiles to their faces is my big dream. Personally, God has always provided for me at the right time, and I am grateful for that. I have a happy family, great friends, and an enthusiastic

community that cherishes life and values connection. I think about Mother Angelica who had only \$200 in her bank account when she established the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). One thing is certain: it takes a team of committed, passionate, and compassionate volunteers to make great things happen. My desire is to build a home for these orphans, to give them a dwelling place, something that costs about one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000). I strongly believe in the words of the Psalmist, "Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain." (Ps. 127:1) Imagine seeing a house completed and handed over to these kids who have no capacity to repay. Imagine being a part of a project that will transform the lives of young kids who have no support from anywhere else. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta would say, "Let us do something beautiful for God."

Meet The Kids



MARILYN, an amazing survival story

Marilyn is about six years old now. She was abandoned on the streets. Marilyn has complicated health conditions including oral dysphagia (inability to chew food and problems transporting food from the mouth) which led to a speech impediment. Her two legs are deformed making it almost impossible to walk. Marilyn is such an inspiring kid.



JOY, God wills all to be saved.

Joy is approximately 16 years of age. She was found abandoned on the streets and brought to the orphanage. The whereabouts of her family is unknown. She has a speech impediment and manifests symptoms of mental illness. Joy has multiple episodes of seizures and requires intensive care.



JOSEPH, we are God's hands and feet

The boy Joseph was abandoned after delivery. Now about seven years old, Joseph can neither sit nor stand. He is unable to talk. Joseph requires intensive care, a special bed to sleep on, a wheelchair to move, special therapy as well as advanced medical assistance. Joseph cannot swallow solid food.



EMMANUELLA, The Lord is my shepherd.

Emmanuella is about 9 years old. Her parents simply wished she was dead and would starve her for days. She was locked up in her room as parents traveled hoping she would be dead upon return. Emmanuella has multiple fractures in her limbs resulting in permanent disabilities. She still experiences PTSD and will occasionally convulse.



CLINTON, Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Clinton is a teenager, about 16 years old with no family history. Picked up with lots of bruises on his body, he experiences multiple seizures. Taking care of Clinton's daily medication is a challenge for the nuns. Having medication is crucial, for without it Clinton can be difficult to manage.



SUSAN, The Lord hears the cry of the poor.

Susan is a teenager about 19 years of age. She was picked up on the streets with no known family history. She has severe cognitive impairments and is unable to speak. She requires intensive care.



TRINITAS, the one with the big smile.

Trinitas is about 4 years old. She was abandoned by the mother right after delivery. She has hydrocephalus and some cognitive impairment. Trinitas is always smiling.



MICHAEL, The God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Michael is about 10 years old and was rescued from his mentally challenged mother. He is fully traumatized. Michael also suffers from seizures and can be difficult to manage.



KOSISOCHUKWU/CHIBUIKE Let the little children come to me.

Kosi (God's will) is four years old while his brother Chibuikwe (God's power) is almost 2 years of age. Their teenage mom left them with an elderly grandmother before fleeing the village. The grandmother eventually died. These two kids are not disabled but have no one to take care of them.



GODWIN, Alone with none but thee my God.

Godwin is about 19 years old, with no history of any family connection. Godwin has a severe physical condition, suffers from multiple seizures, and lacks the proper balance to stand or walk.

The story of these kids is real. They are desirous of our friendship and we can definitely help. *Here's how you can join this outreach:*

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Tribute to Henrietta Peters (1972 - 2021)

I lived only for a little while but I enjoyed it.
I was in the world, yet looked forward to eternity.
I cherished the people around me.
I saw everyone as given for a special purpose.
I admired what I did and the times I did them.
I worked hard when I had to.
I shared friendship with those who mattered to me.
Family meant the whole world for me so I gave it my all.
There are three things I loved doing: being myself, being there for others, and being in God. So, I really prayed because I believed strongly in God. It paid off well.
I knew I would go back to God the origin and source of all joy; not sure when but I knew somehow that it was coming.
This was my joy, the reason why I lived.
To be here on earth was fun but to go into eternity is my fulfillment.
Gratitude is the best gift for the opportunity to live.
God, thanks for the opportunity you gave me in this life. Thanks for the opportunity to live in your presence forevermore.





Forgiveness

Is The Sweetest Revenge

Jeanette Cohn

When I was asked to write this article on friendship, I immediately agreed thinking the topic would be easy. Ironically, it was one of my best friends that asked me to do it, so naturally I felt comfortable. Later, however, she informed me of the topic... "The Importance of Forgiveness in Friendship." That changed everything.

I was stumped. I am not sure why, but I could not think of much to write other than the sugary, Hollywood-hype that one might read in People Magazine. Forgiveness and friendship? Of course, friends forgive...that's what makes them friends. They tolerate each other's idiosyncrasies. BFFs (best friends forever) through thick and thin. The childhood pact sealed with the smudge of blood from interlocking pricked fingers. I knew the connection, but explaining it as such made it seem too undervalued.

Certainly, forgiveness is a strong attribute of friendship. But to what degree? A simple disagreement? Disappointment over a broken promise? Jealousy? Envy? To understand the importance of this, I pondered whether I actually had a friendship with anyone that I had to truly forgive. For someone to be considered my friend, there has to be more than a common bond of our state in life. There has to be trust

that even if we disagreed on things, we would not turn on one another - no "throwing a friend under the bus" or "stabbing them in the back." If that happened, which it has, that person, while forgiven, would no longer be considered my friend. Unveiling that reality stung. The question remained: To what degree is forgiveness important in friendship; how deep can someone cut before the rope is frayed?

The answer to this may be within the

“Forgiveness allows the heart to open back up providing room for the “mutual liking and regard” to foster the relationship once again.”

etymology of the word, "friendship." According to Online Etymology Dictionary, "friendship" originates from the Old English word "freondscipe," meaning "mutual liking and regard" (friend) and "quality, condition; relation between" (-ship). "Mutual liking and regard"... Respect, trust, commonality, unified in spirit and mind. That's the "quality, condition, (and) relation between" two people making them friends. If there is "mutual liking and regard", there most assuredly would not be much need for

forgiveness of any great depth.

Yet isn't friendship a form of love? If so, to truly love someone requires selfless, and unconditional forgiveness. Scripture says, "Love prospers when a fault is forgiven but dwelling on it separates close friends." (Proverbs 17:9) Had I "separated close friends" because I chose to walk away from the brokenness, dwelling on the fault? Had the "cut" been so deep that it justified a severing of a once "mutual liking and regard"?

Not to be mistaken, there are toxic, unhealthy relationships and some are disguised as friendship. Again, friendship is a form of love and one can misconceive the true inherent characteristics of that love, referred to as philia. Philia is close friendship or brotherly love. According to St. Augustine, the inherent characteristics of close friendship are those integrated with a common goal, and the sharing of interests and values with mutual respect and regard for the other. As with spousal love, the relationship is nurtured with the self-giving devotion of both individuals. In any toxic relationship, there is undeniably an imbalance of self-donation and, thus, one member becomes enslaved. Intrinsicly, friendship is freedom to experience commonalities encompassing love while maintaining individuality. When one becomes harmfully driven by envy, jealousy,

control, and such, the relationship does not exhibit the "inherent characteristics" of an authentic friendship. Is there ever a justification for ending a friendship? There were a few relationships I had during my early thirties that were unhealthy... one-sided, drama-infused, and painfully draining. After a few years of emotional abuse, and through the help of professional and spiritual guidance, I broke those relationships. I forgave these former friends, but spent many years recovering from the trauma which caused me to have to forgive over and over again. I have yet to reconcile these relationships. I cannot. There was no security in our relationship due to the betrayal. I realized that those were never true friends. However, if we were to meet in some setting one day, I would be kind, considerate, and social to them because that is the healing power of forgiveness.



Jeanette Cohn has been happily married to her husband of 35 years. She is a mother of seven and has three grandsons. She has a BA in Special Education from USF. After working in that field for 15 years, she decided to homeschool her children. While homeschooling for 21 years, she also founded St. John Paul II Formation Cooperative and Highschool Tutorial and started a private tutoring business. She currently works at Divine Mercy Academy in Pasadena, MD. She loves singing and writing when she isn't teaching or spending time with her family.

I buried a lot to protect myself from the hurt, which prevented me from understanding the true importance of forgiving her. Our friendship had value; our friendship had purpose; It was time for restoring, rebuilding, restructuring the relationship.

This came about through forgiveness. Many years after being distant with each other, we opened the lines of communication. Each of us could look at things from a fresh and different perspective; we almost allowed a third party to destroy what we had. I knew God had a plan, and my friend was part of the plan. There was value in our

friendship from years ago, and it was now time to reinvest in the relationship.

The words of William Arthur Ward can be helpful here, "Friendship flourishes at the fountain of forgiveness." Water cleanses, refreshes, and rejuvenates. Through forgiveness, both of us were able to pass through the murkiness of our blindness to see inside the other. A new importance of commonality "uniting the spirit and mind" emerged from the healing waters of forgiveness, bridging that which was divided.

Forgiveness is essential in true friendship because it allows healing when the imperfections and individualities unravel the beautiful tapestry of friendship. Of the above-mentioned relationship, there were three of us in the friendship. One friend was like a mentor to me, although we were close in age. She helped me find a spiritual community and guided me through my first few years as a homeschooling mom. I valued her persistence, humility, desire to learn, compassion, and so much more. She helped me believe in what I could do and held out her hand whenever I fell to make sure I did not stay down too long. For twelve years, we formed a strong friendship even when our state in life kept us from spending time together. Yet, something happened to change all that: the deception of another person, from a toxic relationship, enticed my friend into questioning the integrity of our friendship. Lies, rumors, fears. My friend was wooed by fallacious, wicked whispers. And when she could no longer determine the truth, she lashed out at me. She said some hurtful things - not directly about me but about what I represented. It was as though she doubted my integrity and that hurt.

It needed time for the wounds of our friendship to heal, forgiveness, that's what was required. But how can that happen? These wounds seemed to press upon the scars of the others making it even more difficult to work through the forgiveness.



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FRIENDSHIP in SEMINARY FORMATION:

When the Going gets Tough

Luke Koski

There are many times in life when the going gets tough. Whether it be a family emergency, a personal difficulty, or a challenging situation, sometimes we can feel as though we are in over our heads. At these times, questions can start to arise in our hearts. Can I keep doing this? How long will this go on? What can I do to make this easier?

During my years in the seminary, there have certainly been times when these questions have arisen in my own heart. For those of us studying to become priests, it might be a class that we are struggling in, a formation goal that we have been trying to accomplish after years of perseverance, a difficult pastoral assignment, a conflict in the choice to either continue or not, a family-related concern, or even a worldwide pandemic. Whatever the difficulty might be, there has consistently been one thing that has always made these crosses bearable: friendship.

Now, the friendship that I am speaking about is not the kind that you find easily. These are not the friends you reach out to only when you need something. These are not the friends you have because you happen to be at the same place over a long period of time. The kind of friend that I am speaking about is the one who shares your deepest values and beliefs. A friend who cares about your well-being and will sacrifice his (or her) time and energy for your sake.

Thanks be to God, the seminary is full of these kinds of people. People who love Jesus Christ, His Church, virtues, prayer, knowledge, truth, goodness, beauty. At

seminary, there are dozens of men who desire to walk with one another in their pursuit of holiness.



voice the feelings that you are experiencing and have the possibility of receiving feedback is an invaluable gift for seminarians.

There is a saying, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Life is more of a marathon than a sprint, but we can often fall into the temptation of traveling alone thinking that it will be the surest way of reaching the destination. What ends up happening instead is we lose the support that we need, endangering the motivation we need to reach the destination.

Friendship is actually so crucial to persevering through challenges that the seminary faculty recommends that seminarians form small groups called *Jesu* groups. These groups are meant to provide

"...If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

a space and time for us to open up and share the best and worst moments that we have been experiencing since the group's previous meeting. Often, at least one member in the *Jesu* group is going through a difficult situation and needs advice, prayers, or just a listening ear. Being able to

For those who are not seminarians you may be asking yourself, "Where can I find friends like this?" You can find them in the Church! See if your local parish has any groups that you can join. Spend time with the people in that group and share life with those people. Talk to people after Mass and exchange contact information. Take time outside of your normal schedule to talk to and meet with those people who are pursuing goals similar to yours.

You may not be in seminary or on a pastoral assignment, but we all have our own difficulties. We all need people in our lives who will support us and help us get to heaven. My prayer for you is that the Lord leads you to real friends who will help you travel far to our heavenly home. We know the going gets tough, but real friends make the going easier.



Luke Koski is a seminarian studying for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. He is currently a third year theologian at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD. After completing his undergraduate studies in psychology and philosophy at Towson University, he received a Master of Arts in Philosophical Studies while in pre-theology. He is currently in a dual degree Masters program and serves as the Mount Men's Rugby chaplain

Couples Corner

Soft Landing

Fr. Vincent Arisukwu

The phrase, "soft landing," did not make much sense to me until a recent flight from Baltimore to Texas on board a local airline. The flight was smooth, which indeed, was the irony. So, everyone relaxed. Kids are running about on board the airplane. Passengers are chatting. From time to time the airline crew make their routine announcements on the weather conditions. When a flight is smooth, there is nothing to cause alarm. As we approach our destination, the pilot announces the flight's descent and imminent landing. We take it for granted, never imagining anything rough. Suddenly, the plane slams onto the ground. The usual maneuvers pilots use to slow down on the runway seem to be desperate attempts to control the aircraft. Everyone is scared. We clasp our seat handles with white knuckles. Eventually the plane comes to a halt, and we disembark without the energy to say a word. All we want at this point is to get out unharmed, thanks to God. No one bothers to ask the pilot a question, rather, there is a mad rush to get out as the cabin doors open. The peace felt during the flight was lost in the crash-like landing.

Marriage relationships can be likened to traveling by air. Couples serve as pilot and passenger simultaneously in their marital flight together. When a spouse feels like he/she is in the passenger's seat, the spouse wants to feel safe. Just as passengers have down time during their flight, so spouses relax during most travel times in the marriage-craft while in the passenger's seat. Spouses are confident that the pilot-spouse will move in the right direction with safety measures in check. Each spouse anticipates a soft-landing and entertains a few fearful thoughts. Sleeping is allowed on board. Using the restrooms is part of the trip. Stretching is involved in the process. Refreshments are expected, so the journey should be fun. Hence, a rough landing can be a shocking experience, mostly because it comes as a huge surprise. The spouse-pilot inside the cockpit has to make several decisions for the safety of the spouse-passenger. These are those times when finance, health, job, parenting, faith, in-laws, friends, etc., fall on your shoulders as either husband or wife. Always think about creating a soft landing for your spouse.

This metaphor describes the role of emotions in romantic relationships. For Sue Johnson, the founder of emotionally focused therapy (EFT) and the attachment theorists, every romantic partner expects to find in his/her partner a secure attachment base. Your romantic partner in your marriage should be your best friend. It is that person who rides with you, who is either your passenger or

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Interview With Chief David Harkins

In Service of Church and State

Chief David Harkins is a Deacon, from the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey. He is married for 23 years to his wife Lisa, with their 21-year-old son, David, who has Down Syndrome and their 17-year-old daughter Grace, who is a senior in High School. Chief Harkins is a 26 year veteran in the police force, currently serving as Chief of Police in the Gloucester Township Police Dept. in Camden County, NJ. He supervises approximately 135 police officers, patrolling the 70,000 resident Township of Gloucester, a close suburb of Philadelphia. Interestingly, his father is also a deacon of the Church. David is assigned at Holy Child Parish in Runnemede, NJ. A pivotal point in his life came when his son was born in 2000 with Down Syndrome, something that was totally unexpected. The decision was made that his wife would stay home with little David and get him early intervention services.

FA - Our current magazine issue is about friendship but within that context, we have brought the lives of the kids in the orphanage to light. They are mostly children with a wide range of disabilities. As a parent of a child who has Down Syndrome, what would you say to a parent with a child who is disabled?

When you become a parent of a child with disabilities, you automatically become an advocate. Without question, the family is under attack. A woman goes to the doctor, gets the test and it comes back as Down Syndrome, the child has the highest probability of being aborted. I wouldn't be

here without my son. The joy, love and even intangible things that my son has brought to our family. He makes us better people.

FA - In Africa, there is a stigma associated with having a child like David. There are no services to help these children and parents don't want anyone to know they have a disabled child. They are hidden in the shadows.

That's what happened here in the US generations ago and I always say that the parents who went ahead of me were the pioneers. The people who were feisty and fought for their children and insisted on inclusive education and services. I received the benefit of that. It was people of good will who first fought for it. I believe that by your example, that tide will turn in Nigeria. But they need someone like Fr. Vin to be one of the good people to fight for it.

FA - There is an impression in the society these days about being a first responder. What specific challenges do

you find being both a police officer and a deacon?

The challenges are profound at times. This was one of the key building blocks of my formation of bridging the gap between faith and work or whatever else you do. Some of the men in my formation class were teachers or construction workers, I was a police officer. But it's about being bold in our faith and being examples of our Catholic faith. People are often uninformed about what the Church teaches. Others have left the faith but were never catechized. In formation we learned a lot about the corporal works of mercy. There are so many works of mercy that go on in



Chief David Harkins

the police department but the media doesn't want to capture or report on that. They are looking for the 'gotcha' moments. Police officers feed the hungry, care for sick, we do it all the time. One thing I've tried to show my officers is the importance of learning about empathy and especially as police officers. It's important to look at situations, not through your eyes, but through the eyes of the other person; whether that's a criminal or a victim or a homeless person. It's trying to see things through their eyes and what they're going through. For example, I've seen this change throughout the years working with drug addicts. When I first became an officer years ago, they were just junkies and you never looked beyond the arrest. Today we look at it as we are trying to prevent the next incident for this person. Even to the point where we are carrying NARCAN which reverses the effect of opioid overdose. We see people, who are literally dying in front of us from a drug overdose, and are able to spray the NARCAN in their nose and save their lives. It used to be a drug that only paramedics carried. And some people might complain and say "Why save them? They're criminals who will just steal again" or whatever. But some of it is experience because I have had to notify mothers of their child who overdosed and they were good kids and it touches everyone, so many lives. So, I've gotten to the point that if we don't save that person from the overdose then they have no chance of recovering tomorrow. And sometimes it's the same person who has overdosed many times but you have to have that hope that they will reverse out of it. Then there is trying to get the person to a treatment center. It's where the empathy comes in as to how the person got to this point. It's treating that person as if Christ is in front of me. Or asking myself "How would Christ treat this person?" They are the new lepers and how do we encounter them and treat them well. It's bringing God into these situations and letting people know that He is there.

FA - Are there specific ways you experience the faith in the police force?

It's also letting officers know that it's okay to share their faith. We've had a lot of success with the chaplaincy program. We're blessed to have a Catholic chaplain who is also my spiritual director who got me through the diaconate. We've also brought community chaplains of all faiths who help us in death notification situations or crime scenes. They come out and take over for the officers and it's amazing what I've seen happen when a prayer is offered. Just praying changes the whole temperature even if there is tension and you can feel the Holy Spirit injecting Himself into the situation.



Deacon Harkins and Family
with Bishop Dennis Sullivan (Diocese Camden)

FA - In my previous encounter with you, I heard you administer ashes at work on Ash Wednesday. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

On shift work, it can be difficult to get ashes so I learned from our chaplain, Msgr. Michael Mannion, to bring ashes. And I would have a little service in the briefing room and was surprised at the people who would come from all the municipal offices for ashes. And now that I'm a deacon, people are coming to my office with questions about the faith, for advice or help

with family problems. It's opened up opportunities for conversions to the faith, having marriages recognized in the faith, and baptisms of children.

FA - In talking about trust, I'm wondering from your experience with all the problems and political messiness going on, how can the society and the police foster friendship?

It's always a challenge. We're always going to have bad apples in every profession and that's always what gets the attention. Nothing upsets good police officers like bad police officers. I had mentioned about this internal trust. It also ties in with what I talked about regarding empathy. It's critical that we humanize the officers and humanize those we are interacting with. Getting to know the community is so important and what we do now pays dividends when there is a crisis. A good analogy I like to use regarding the police is that mentality of the sheepdog with the flock. The presence of the sheepdog is an annoyance to the sheep. They annoy by pushing them and keeping them going. It's the same when you're pulling people over for running the stop sign or disobeying traffic laws. But the sheepdog analogy is also true that when the wolf comes, it's the sheepdog that steps up to protect the sheep. The sheepdog will die to protect the sheep, to fight off the wolf. And so that

analogy is good for the police because the reality is that at times, we have to be the guardian and at other times we have to be a warrior. Recently I've been involved in a "Blue Mass" with Bishop Sullivan, where all the officers who went before us are honored and it includes all first responders. I had the honor of preaching at that mass. We have it on the Feast of the Archangels. It made me reflect on the archangels as messengers and guardians but they are also warriors in protecting us against evil. I know that evil exists. And fighting it, I know that a huge part of that is getting out into the

communities, getting to know the people and it also humanizes the police officers too.

They get to know us and it builds trust. We are human beings who put our pants on the same way as everyone else. And we do a lot of community fundraisers and charity events. We have bookbag drives, we have "shop with a cop" for needy kids. We collaborate with our local schools and identify the kids who are in need for the holidays. The kids think they were picked randomly.

FA – What message would you give to this generation for the spirit of service and the difference that knowing God makes because the friendship we are talking about starts with being friends with God. The level of secularization today has changed everything so much. Relativism is high, they call it post modernism. From the point of view of being a dad, being a deacon, being a husband, being a police chief.

One of the most difficult things as an officer with secularism is the interfering with my faith in marriage. Marriage is between a man and a woman. I consider myself a traditionalist. Orthodoxy is the key for me and that tends to scare people. Just having my beliefs when I was coming up before I was a police chief, people will take shots at you. And it can set you up that your beliefs are going to make you anti-gay or anti Catholic. I had the opportunity to tell people that my faith teaches me to love all. I often encounter others who have same sex attraction and I treat them as I do everyone else. I am proud to serve with them, and will die next to them in the performance of our duties. There have been times I have experienced those who don't understand what the Church teaches, and they become hyper-sensitive to my beliefs. I have also experienced the issue of gender ideology, especially in young people, where people want to change their biological gender. We see secular society telling them that they can decide what they want to be. It's always been very clear in the past but now the lines are blurred. We've fallen into

relativism and truth is what I say it is. A person can identify as whatever they want. It's becoming more and more difficult and confusing. Again, we must treat all with love and respect, but we must also recognize and stand up for the Truth of Jesus Christ. The early Christians didn't have it any easier, and if we have to go to martyrdom protecting the truth, then we go and the faith will grow. We need to stand our ground with love and the truth of Christ. We need to be bold and have courage to go out and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to a world that so desperately needs it.



Deacon David (R) and Deacon Michael J. Harkins (Dad)

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pilot at any time. He/she is that person who relies on you in your flight. You become the confidant because you know and hold their greatest secrets, their emotions, strengths, and weaknesses. He/she is that person who believes that you would be there to take the blows for him/her, so there is a feeling of safety. You don't want to let your passenger crash if you are in the pilot's seat. Don't crash-land if you are the spouse-pilot.

The challenge here is for you to assess whether you provide a soft landing for your spouse in your relationship. Soft landings occur when you are fully present and produce friendly and inspiring communication channels. Soft landings generate kind and comforting words. Soft landings ensue when you check in to reassure your spouse of your love and affection. They transpire when you acknowledge mistakes and apologize for your errors. Soft landings make both of you look forward to coming home at the end of

the day's work. Soft landings elicit healthy conversations around faith, finance, health, in-laws, sex, dreams, failures, and

“In marriage, soft landings enable couples to identify the cause of a conflict without accusing each other as the problem”

ambitions without anxiety. Soft landings happen when your spouse can share their shortcomings with you without worrying about your negative or critical judgments and remarks. Soft landings in marriage enable couples to identify the cause of a



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conflict without accusing each other as the problem. Soft landings create empathy for the partner and enable you to remember your marriage vows and promises. Turbulence will occur. Storms will threaten. Bumps show up. As co-pilots, both of you reassure each other of stability and safety. You must remind each other that your destination is guaranteed. The best soft landing assurance is constant touch with God who controls the weather and the storms in your married life. Humility, sincerity, compassion, respect, and love are the instruments needed for a safe sense of direction. God brings you calm in Christ Jesus, the reason why Saint Paul declares, "For He himself is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). Give your spouse a soft landing, and she/he will always gladly ride with you.

Faithful Friends

Andrew Sybert

As stated in Sirach 6:14, "A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one finds a treasure." Although when I was younger I found this verse confusing, once it was explained to me it made more sense. It is now one of my favorite Scripture quotes and reminds me of God's love for us. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the verse itself and then show its importance in our everyday lives. "A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter..." describes what we should look for in a true friend. A friend is a close acquaintance, but is not always someone we can rely on. Faithfulness is a key factor in good friends. When very close, they can be on the annoying side as they know a lot about you, but in the end, they mean well. The important thing is that when you need them most, they are the shelter in the raging weather that keeps you safe. A friend is a shelter through the good times and bad; nothing is more valuable. The phrase "...he who finds one

treasure (unless they walked through glitter confetti), they still hold value. Sentimental value is probably the key thing when it comes to defining treasure, as a treasure to someone could just be a rock, but it has a very important story connected to it, and

things such as a family, food, clothes, and more. If He willed it, He could simply erase everything from existence, but He loves us even if we sin, and He is a forgiving God. A friend always forgives if you are truly sorry, just like our ultimate friend, God. God's



“To find faithful friends, we have to be one first, like God is to us”

finds a treasure," helps explain the worth of a true friend: a friend is a treasure, although perhaps not literally since the Bible uses lots of imagery to express God's meanings. What it means is that treasure is very valuable and is worth a lot, so is a friend. While they aren't glittery and shiny like

therefore it is valuable to that person. Treasure is often hard to find in our lives, unless we dig deep, just like finding real friends. Our eyes can often deceive us when we are looking for something. One of my friends is rather tough and somewhat mean, but he has a soft side and is loyal to his friends; that's what I appreciate about him. The true treasure is friends who are there for us through thick and thin. God is also our friend; He has been there for us from the very beginning. He has given us many

love for us is beyond compare, the only way to see it is if our eyes are open to Him.

Friends are there for us when we need them the most. Sirach 6:14 makes sense now, does it not? True friends are worth more than all the money in the world. To find faithful friends, we have to be one first, like God is to us. Therefore we all have the ability to find treasure, we need only stop and see it. Thanks be to God for His friendship and for faithful friends.



Andrew (Drew) Sybert is a sophomore attending Cornerstone Homeschool Tutorial and the youngest of four children. He enjoys being an altar server and sacristan at his parish, St. Jane Frances, and can often be found playing video games, target shooting (especially riflery), or chilling out with Squirt, the world's friendliest cat. His friends describe him as someone with a big heart who knows how to give a good hug when you need one.

Joy & Pat

Share their Story, 62 Years Friendship

Joy Wilburt

A Friend: A special person that grows up with you, who travels the journey, who listens, who cries with you and for you, who makes you happy, and most importantly, prays for you everyday.

Here is a story of my friendship with Pat, since the summer of 1959; yes, I said 1959! Pat was going into Grade 6 and I was entering Junior High. (Back then grade school ended after Grade 6 and then you entered Jr. High in Grade 7.) Although we met then, our relationship did not blossom until the following year when we both were in Junior High. From that point on we called ourselves friends, since we lived just a few houses apart.

We grew up in a wonderful neighborhood filled with many children our age and with that came many parents that all took care to be sure we were safe and well cared for. It was the "play outside" era. Even as teens we loved being outdoors - gathering to play ball or dig in the sand pits.

Time passed and before we knew it, we were group dating. Then during our High School years, we began single dating and each became engaged to our boyfriends. That was roughly 56 years ago. Pat fell in love with Ken and I with Rick.

Our High School days were spent preparing for Graduation and with my help, Pat was preparing to become Catholic. Father ran the "Convert Classes." "Learn your prayers," he said. "Go to Confession!" Pat thought, "What prayers? What is Confession?" So much to learn from a one-hour talk once a week, no handouts, just information. "Joy, HELP!" With lots of reciting and help from me, Pat's faith formation had begun. Pat's lessons lasted about 6 months and in the spring of

1966 with me as Godmother and Sponsor, she became Catholic.

Both of us were married in 1966, about 5 weeks apart. The following March, Rick and I became parents to a little girl, Valerie, and in April, Pat and Ken welcomed a little boy, Michael.



Joy Wilburt



Pat Stanley

My husband, Rick, was in the Navy, so we moved away from Maryland for the next 12 years, but we always stayed in touch. Both families welcomed two more children respectively over the next 9 years: George and John to Rick and I, and Mark and Susan to Pat and Ken.

We mostly got together when my family came back to Maryland for visits, but one summer the Stanleys traveled to the Great Lakes region to visit us. With children in tow, we visited the zoo, made fudge, played games, stayed up to wee hours of the morning and the little ones woke us up early as usual.

Before we knew it, my family moved back to Maryland and we got to gather for games

on the weekends and also vacation together. We did not have much money, but we all were happy. There were activities for our children, plus older parents and grandparents to care for, so we were busy, busy, busy.

We attended Holy Trinity Church (now Christ The King) with our families. In 1982, Pat lost her Mom and felt empty inside. During this time, she noticed a bulletin announcement that the church desperately needed catechists. As usual, she called me and said, "Did you see the article in the bulletin about catechists?" I replied that I had. Pat continued, "I think I can do this if you sign up with me." We made the call. The opening was Kindergarten, but the Holy Spirit gave us the push to do it. We ministered together that year and the following year I moved to middle school.

Then a path opened in front of us: catechist certification, church leadership positions, and many other training classes. We knew the Lord was molding us and leading us. Later, we both moved to administrator positions, I served in youth ministry and Pat in the elementary grades, which included Sacramental Preparation for both of us.

Working together so much as administrators, there were many times that our differences might have created problems. However, we have always been able to search for the "yes" moment where we both agree. We are both compulsive and obsessive in different ways. Pat is the artistic one and I am the logistical planner. So, I plan the set up and workspace, and then say to Pat, "Make it pretty." The team effort makes it work well.

For over sixty years we have had the support of one another for family celebrations, milestone anniversaries, for the loss of family members, everyday life, and yes, we still share desserts. Pat still volunteers me for most of the things she wants us to do, and together we happily accept the challenge. We are blessed to have seventeen grandchildren between us and each of us has a great-grandchild. We do remain active but it just takes us a bit longer to accomplish our wish list these days.

Our vocations of marriage and then church ministry have been a blessing, and we knew that God had a plan for us. As administrators of Religious Education/Youth, Coordinators of Religious Education, we have worked together. In retirement, we volunteer together for our Parish Bereavement Team and now are involved helping with money counting for our parish, doing tasks as needed, and co-leading a Bible study group called *Listening Hearts*. We also volunteer at a non-profit, *Hope For All*, which provides those in need in Anne

“For over sixty years we have had the support of one another for family celebrations, milestone anniversaries, for the loss of family members, everyday life, and yes, we still share desserts.”

Arundel County with basic household items and clothing.

There are so many people to thank for supporting us over the years, especially our husbands for Daddy duty when we were volunteering and attending classes and their financial support as well. Who could live on a church administrator's salary? We remember and hold in our hearts all the pastors and priests we served under. We also thank the many mentors, staff members, co-workers, co-catechists, and parent volunteers. All the people who said, "Yes," to the ministry to build God's Kingdom and educate and form young people.

Finally, I thank God for the experience of our long-term friendship; it is a blessing that many have not had the chance to enjoy. I believe that a friend is one who strengthens you with prayers, blesses you with love, and encourages you with hope.

A sweet friendship refreshes the soul. Proverbs: 27:9



25th Wedding Anniversary, L to R Rick and Joy Wilburt, Pat and Ken Stanley 1991



Bride Pat Stanley(left), Maid of Honor, Joy Wilburt (right)



Celebrating birthdays



Bride Joy Wilburt (center), Maid of Honor Pat Stanley (center) 1966



Praying *for* Priests

A Gift That Lavishes

Patti Rubin

Nothing in life happens by accident. Christ is always passing by if we have the heart to see Him. He also makes Himself more obvious at certain times in life than others. St. Teresa of Avila used to tell her sisters not to be sad about leaving their chapel time for work by reminding them, "Christ walks among the pots and pans." September 7, 2003, the last day of my mother's life, was one of those days that Jesus made His presence abundantly clear. It was a Sunday morning, and the priest came to the house to anoint her. Young and handsome, Father gently spoke to my mother, then anointed her. I'll never forget what happened next.

This brawny priest knelt on the floor beside her bed, and bowing his head implored her to pray for him. "Please, your prayers are so powerful at this time. Pray for me! Pray for my priesthood that I will become a holy priest." I was stunned. From her sickbed, my mother placed her little hand on his waft of wavy hair and praying for him, she promised to offer her dying pains for him. They were, in a particular way, anointing each other. Watching this touching, heartbreaking scene, it had a depth that I couldn't fully process in the moment. The opposites before me: priest and penitent, young and old, healthy and sick, male and female, yet it was a perfect match at the same time. A friend who recently lost his mother remarked at her funeral, "Mothers teach their children many lessons, but the

most important lesson they teach is how to die a holy death." My mother certainly did that.

Most of the terrible problems in this world could be transformed by holy priests seeking the heart of Christ. People want God even if they don't know it. World peace would result from people honestly seeking God. A bold statement, yes, but I believe it to be true. St. John Vianney converted more than 250,000 souls in his lifetime, and the devil once shrieked at him, "Vianney, Vianney, if there were 3 priests such as you, my kingdom would be destroyed." Praying before the Blessed Sacrament with a heart on fire with love for God, making reparation for His priests, can literally change the world. "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (Peter 4:8).

I became so convinced of this that I assembled a little Cenacle (a spiritual prayer group) of devout women who make a Holy Hour for a local priest each day before the Blessed Sacrament. This group does a great but quiet work. Interestingly, there is a book written on the transforming love of St. Mary Magdalene for the Eucharistic Body of Jesus. St. Mary Magdalene: Prophetess of Eucharistic Love by Fr. Sean Davidson. In it, Fr. Davidson offers many reflections on the incredible life and seraphic love of Mary Magdalene for Jesus, one that earned her the title Apostle

to the Apostles. It's connected to praying for priests and merits a closer look.

Fr. Davidson offers compelling evidence that Mary Magdalene is the same Mary of Bethany. In every example, the Mary in question is always doing the same thing: loving Jesus with an extravagant, radical love. And the response of Jesus is consistent. He defends and praises her in almost every single text. Mary Magdalene is unfailingly found at His feet in adoration which always moves the heart of Christ to action. St. Frances de Sales in his homily on her feast day said, "I don't recall ever having seen that woman, the excellent Magdalene, anywhere but at the feet of Christ." He calls her the spiritual queen.

A scene both touching and instructive about the essence of Mary Magdalene's soul, occurs in Luke 7 as Jesus dines at the home of the Pharisee. It was customary to greet the guests, wash their feet, and anoint their forehead with oil, especially if the person was a guest of honor. So, here, we have God in the flesh coming to dinner, and the Pharisee ignores Jesus. Suddenly, this woman bursts onto the scene, unwelcome, uninvited, but she doesn't care. St. Catherine of Sienna once remarked that Mary Magdalene was "as self-conscious as a drunken woman." The people probably thought she was crazy and, out of her mind, but she doesn't care. Her sole focus is adoring Christ. She's been called by the

Holy Spirit to make reparation for the ingratitude, the insults, the indifference shown to the Sacred Person of Jesus. Her great love makes reparation for the total lack of respect for the Lord shown by the Pharisee. And when the Pharisee complains about her, Jesus rebukes him. He compares and contrasts the extravagant treatment of Mary against the indifference of the Pharisee. He says that you didn't greet me with a kiss, but she hasn't ceased kissing my feet. You didn't wash my feet but she has washed my feet with her tears. You didn't anoint my head with oil but she has anointed my feet with perfumed oil. Everything she does is elevated above and beyond and this great love for Jesus makes reparation for the outrages and sacrileges committed against Him. Love covers a multitude of sins. He says that she has been forgiven much, therefore she loves much. Mary Magdalene does this time and again throughout the Gospels.

St. Luke shares in Chapter 10 that Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to every word that comes forth from His mouth with rapture while Martha stresses about making dinner. When Martha complains to Him, Jesus again defends Mary. Fr. Davidson contends that this Mary is Mary Magdalene. In John 11, we find the same behavior of Mary at the feet of Jesus, crying over the death of her brother Lazarus. Watching the state of her distress, Jesus is moved to tears Himself and says, "take me to the tomb." Such love moves His heart to action. She's at His feet at the crucifixion. She's looking for Him in the dark at the tomb begging the person she thought was the gardener to take her to where the body of Jesus was moved. When she recognized the Lord, she prostrated herself in adoration and in that moment, He made her the Apostle to the Apostles. Mary Magdalene was single-hearted in her devotion. After Our Lady and St. Joseph, she is the model of adoration for us.

What is adoration? Radical love for Jesus, amazement, awe, submission, prostrating ourselves at the feet of Jesus, filled with love for Him. Mary Magdalene in every scripture passage shows radical love which is a game changer. If we imitate this woman, I'm convinced we'll become a saint. She's the model for us in what Pope Saint John Paul II called "Eucharistic

amazement." A man who was also deeply devoted to Eucharistic Adoration. Radical love for God draws Him like a magnet. Sadly, it is rare these days. Jesus once lamented to St. Faustina, "When I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, my hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul. But souls do not even pay attention to Me; they leave Me to Myself and busy themselves with other things. ... They treat

**“What is adoration?
... prostrating
ourselves at the feet
of Jesus, filled with
love for Him.”**

Me as a dead object" (Diary of St. Faustina, 1385).

Having holy priests makes a huge difference in the church and in the world. Supporting these priests spiritually adds blessings and spiritual protection to their pastoral ministry. This is what devout women do, the reason why we are forming the cenacle of prayer for priests. Scripture recognizes this ministry this way, "Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of

Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs." (Mk. 15:40-41) I believe the priest recognized this when he knelt down to ask for my mother's blessing in 2003. Priests need spiritual support. I am not talking about spontaneous prayer for priests, which everyone can do, but rather dedicating a specific time, for one hour per week before the Blessed Sacrament, for a specific priest. This is an important ministry, a contemplative effort. You will choose the day of the week and the time most convenient for you to pray for the priest of your choice. When six other sisters (seven total connect the week) are joined with you, the same priest is covered by a holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament, every single day, 365 days a year. That's powerful!

St Mary Magdalene, pray for us.

If you feel called to be part of the Family Apostolate Ministry in praying for priests or would like more information, please contact me at familyapostolate.com or familypriestfiles@gmail.com

1. Abbe Francis Trochu, "The Cure D'Ars, St. Jean-Marie Baptiste Vianney" (Tan Books and Publishers Inc. 1977, originally published in 1927)
2. Fr. Sean Davidson, "Saint Mary Magdalene: Prophetess of Eucharistic Love" (Ignatius Press 2017)



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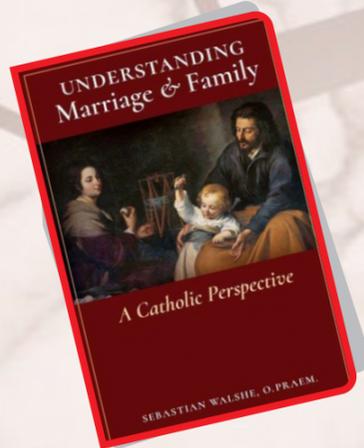


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Book Review:

UNDERSTANDING Marriage & Family: A Catholic Perspective

Christine Sybert

Have you ever struggled in a discussion with a friend or family member when defending marriage, trying to prove that it can only be between one man and one woman? Do you wish you had better points to make when presenting your beliefs in the value of a traditional family – especially those who don't believe in God and therefore won't listen to your religious viewpoints? This book from Fr. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem., a Norbertine priest, is good news for you. Fr. Walshe pulls from his years of experience as a teacher at the college preparatory high school at St. Michael's Abbey in Orange County, California. In an interview about the book, he stated that his students, who were raised in Catholic families, felt powerless to respond to the many objections they were getting from friends, social media, television, radio, internet, newspapers, etc., about the traditional beliefs of marriage they were taught at home. He realized that he needed to write a whole course, basically the first semester of his Apologetics (defense of the Faith) class, devoted to marriage and family, and this book is the result of that effort.¹

Fr. Walshe divides the main apologetics information into two branches: Reason and Revelation. The first section of the book discusses what can be known by anyone in any culture, place, or system of beliefs... truths that can be known by reason or *natural law*. For example, a man and a woman are naturally able to have children together, and fathers and mothers should protect and provide for their children.

In the second section of the book, God's revelation about family and marriage is presented through the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Holy Family. In the final section, practical applications to Christian families are given, as well as spiritual formation suggestions and ways to heal corruptions in family life.

While the entire book has valuable information, it is the first section, where the arguments for the *reasonableness* of the traditional family were presented, that were most insightful... I took 8 pages of typed notes from these four chapters alone! Those trying to educate and form their children, grandchildren, or anyone who does not want to hear a Biblical viewpoint on marriage would benefit immensely from spending some time reading and taking notes on this book. Fr. Walshe provides grounded apologetics information, pulled from the writings of Thomas Aquinas on the natural law but presented in a fairly simple way. A bonus is that in each chapter, he presents common objections that his students would raise (the same ones

society raises) and tackles them with logic, reason, and compassion. An excerpt from the book will illustrate how perfectly Fr. Walshe does this.

Objection: Gender is really a social construct, and now that we have the technology to change men into women and women into men, people ought to have access to these procedures so that their body conforms to their internal awareness of their own identity.

Answer: Modern activists of so-called "gender theory" attempt to alter language in order to justify their ideologies. They make a false distinction between "gender" and "sex." According to this false distinction, "sex" is biological, while "gender" is a social construct and refers to the way in which someone inwardly experiences the way they want to manifest their sexuality.... In reality, when someone self-identifies as something contrary to the objective reality, this is a sign of a psychological illness, not a sign of nature failing to provide the appropriate body.... Authentic charity for such people means helping them change their minds, not helping them change their bodies.... When someone is born with healthy organs, it is not good to desire to change or mutilate them. (pp. 56-57)

Given that we are living in a postmodern world that is ignorant of – and even hostile to – anything related to religion, Fr. Sebastian provides invaluable tools for parents, catechists, and educators who are trying to give their children and students a solid grounding in the Catholic Church's teachings on marriage and family.

Author: Fr. Sebastian Walshe, O.Praem.
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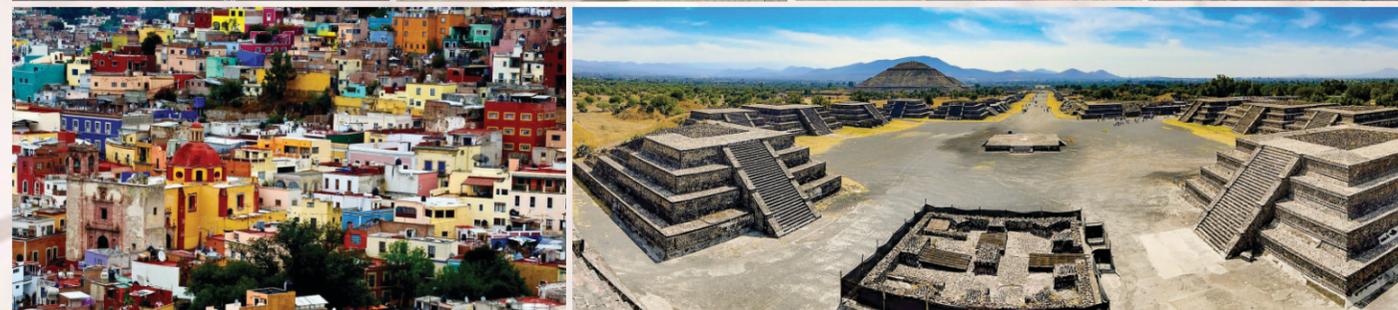
Dr. Sybert is a Clinical Pharmacist who practices at St. Agnes Hospital. She is a member of the Baltimore Guild of the Catholic Medical Association and has a special interest in bioethics. She lives in the Baltimore suburbs with her husband and four teen and pre-teen children.



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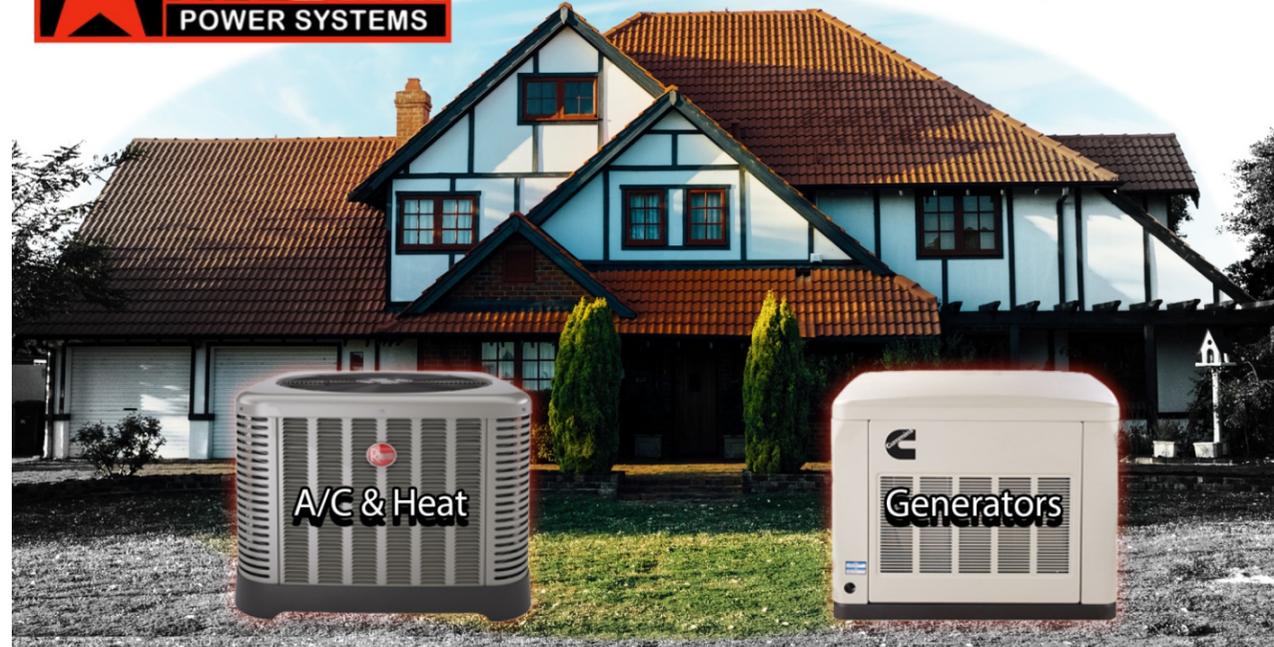


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