



HOME/SCHOOL/PARISH CONNECTION

Friendship

Virtue of the Month:
Friendship

Saintly Exemplar:
St. Patrick
385-461



Sacred Scripture:

“A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one finds a treasure.

There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend, no sum can balance his worth. A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy, and those who fear the Lord will find him. Whoever fears the Lord behaves accordingly, and his friend will be like himself.”

Sirach 6: 14-17

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Friendship between persons : “Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship represents a great good for all. It leads to spiritual communion” (CCC 2347). “The principle of friendship or social charity is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood” (CCC 1939). The depth of our friendship with others is dependent upon and related to our friendship with God.

Friendship with God: “God created man in His own image, male and female He created them; God established him in His friendship” (CCC 355). Even when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and lost His friendship, He did not abandon them to the power of death (CCC 55). “God shows forth His almighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to His friendship by grace” (CCC 277).

What is the virtue of friendship?

The relationship between acquaintances may blossom into friendship when there is a common interest in work or leisure, help is given or received, joys and sorrows are shared, and the good of each is advanced by the other. Friends enjoy the other’s company. Friendship will always involve commitment at some level. The basis of friendship is some kind of communication and it is mutual, selfless, grounded in virtue, with an ongoing development of truthfulness, trust, faithfulness, loyalty, generosity, understanding, modesty, and respect.

- As a friendship develops, the individuals learn to adjust to each other’s temperament, idiosyncrasies, moods and tastes.
- Friendships are not to be developed with ulterior motives in mind, such as gaining popularity or based upon a fascination of a quality (such as exterior beauty, a successful talent) and not based on false and empty “goods exchanged” (purely material objects, unhealthy items such as illegal drugs).
- Strong and meaningful friendships can only develop with persons to the extent that we are growing in a deep and strong relationship with God through regular communication, which is daily prayer. And likewise, the degree of love we have for a friend is indicative of our love for God. “How can I love God who I can’t see if I don’t love the person I can see” (See 1John 4:20-21).

Why do we need the virtue of friendship?

- We are created to be in relationship with others. We are drawn to share our life with others who have similar interests.
- Through regular communication that is noble and good and in sharing in virtuous things, chosen friendships develop and help the individuals to mature in Christian character.
- A true friend wants his friends to be happy. Our friends can only be happy if they live as children of God. Therefore, an authentic friend can never accept or encourage a friend to do anything immoral or illegal. Rather, a real friend helps his friends to perform good deeds and grow in holiness, becoming the best person he can possibly be – the person God created him to be.
- In offering a friend advice or direction, we must accept the fact that this counsel may be rejected. A friend cannot be controlled or forced as freedom is part of true friendship.
- In marriage there is communication of life, work, goods, affection, and indissoluble fidelity. And so married friendship is to be true, holy friendship.

Suggestions for teaching the virtue of friendship at home:

Common principles for the practice of friendship within the family:

- Parents are to model for their children how to be a friend in their relationship with each other. Friendships take work to cultivate and work to maintain. It takes a spirit of service and sacrifice to nurture friendships as it involves giving and not just taking. Friends are more than tools that make life pleasant for oneself.
- Aspects of friendship with others, which include first and foremost family members, involve spending leisure time together, offering assistance when needed, showing compassion during difficult times, keeping in contact, inviting them to our home, visiting and taking a meal when sick, and praying for recovery.
- Get to know the friends of your children. This will require extraordinary wisdom with cell phone and internet usage. The art of communication which is so fundamental to friendship is being lost due to an inordinate usage of time spent in cell phone texting and chatter. Consider the responsibility to teach your children to be present to the person or persons they are with, giving honor to the dignity of each person. Model this with family times together, turning off cell phones and encouraging face to face conversations.

Aspects in teaching the virtue of friendship:

- It is never too early to help your child understand that friends are to be selected wisely and carefully.
- Where there is virtue, friendships develop naturally. Authentic friendship always includes:
 - ◇ Loyalty—we stand by a friend through difficulties except if it will lead us to immoral behavior.
 - ◇ Generosity—we are to offer time, talent, and treasure to a friend when it is useful for his improvement.
 - ◇ Modesty—in male, female friendships, we guard the extent to which we surrender aspects of our intimacy.
 - ◇ Understanding—we need to listen and recognize the various factors which affect a friend's situation.
 - ◇ Trust—we believe in a friend and know we can depend and rely upon him in all circumstances.
 - ◇ Respect—we are to see the good of a friend and accept personality traits that are different than ours.
 - ◇ Spirit of Sacrifice—to be more than an acquaintance we are to be selfless rather than selfish.
 - ◇ Commitment—a friend is there when one is in need, not disregarding prudence with personal obligations.
- Sometimes, teens distance themselves from their parents by having many acquaintances. Help them to become more selective, choosing and distinguishing a few, good friends that can develop a commitment.
- The selection of good friends depends upon the virtues and values learned at home. If they were trained in goodness, goodness will attract them; if immersed in worldly concerns, worldly people will attract them.
- A true friend helps another through exemplary behavior, with advice, and with the influence that close friendship provides. A friend wants his friends to be happy, especially by living as a child of God.
- Those we associate with have a great impact on our lives: people committed to the Faith influence us toward faith, hope, and charity; others may influence us in the wrong way, developing vices rather than virtues.
- Select your child's school carefully because it will be at school that he develops friends. A school that lacks values and ignores God will attract like-minded students. Check the values and moral beliefs of coaches or the leaders of clubs and other organizations that your child wants to join. Help your teens to meet good friends by organizing clubs and activities for young people of the same age and with similar beliefs and values.

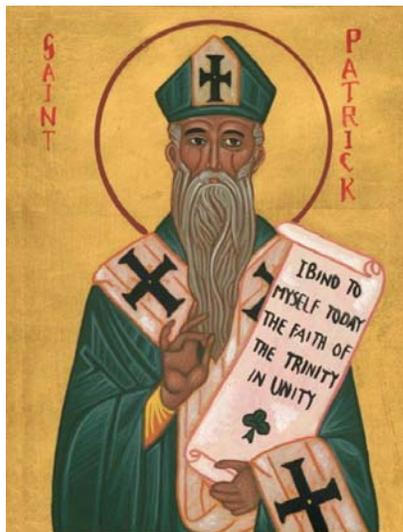
Adapted from *Raise Happy Children Teach Them Joy*, Mary Ann Budnick, R.B. Media, pages 271– 293.

St. Patrick

Steps in learning and developing the virtue of friendship are:

1. The child is guided to develop a friendship with God through daily prayer.
2. The person is taught to recognize his dignity as a child of God and deserving of good friendships.
3. An acquaintanceship begins with a mutual quality, interest, or value held.
4. A friendship develops based upon mutual rapport and common interests with the idea of enjoying, improving and helping each other.
5. The individuals learn to adjust to each other's temperament, moods, and tastes, and help each other grow in character.

Virtues are developed through practice.



Prayer to St. Patrick

Peace between family members,
Peace between relatives,
Peace between friends,
In love of the King of Life.

Peace between person and person,
Peace between wife and husband,
Peace between mother and children,
The peace of Christ above all peace.

Bless, O Christ, my face,
Let my face bless every thing;
Bless, O Christ, my eyes,
Let my eyes bless all that it sees.