

# Theory 8

# SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

## Jesus is our Model

**“Jesus went up into the hills and summoned those he wanted. So, they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach, with power to cast out devils” (Mark 3:13).**

Three things are striking:

1. Jesus wanted a group of companions – a group of friends.
2. He sends them out to bring his mission to others.
3. He sends them with power – enough power to overcome the devil.

Really, we could say that Christianity is about a friendship with Jesus and friendship with others that carries so much power, that Satan will never be able to withstand the force of our friendships!

## Friendship

**Friendship is a special type of love that involves three things:**

- I. Friendship is the coming together of two or more people who want, pursue and delight in a third reality, something beyond the two individuals.
- II. Friendship is unconditional love. We don't value the friend because of their accomplishments or attributes. We just simply think the world is a better place because they are in it, and we delight in them.
- III. Friendship is a demanding love. We think our friend is good just because they exist, but we don't want them to stay that way. We want them to grow to reach all their full potential.

## Spiritual Friendship

As stated above, friendship is the coming together of two people who want, pursue and delight in the same goal, the same good. What is the nature of friendship, spiritual friendship?

- Friendship is shared interest and shared delight in a third reality, something beyond the two individuals.
- That third reality is something we have in common, some field of knowledge or skill.
- It might be a profession or raising kids or quilting or deer hunting or hiking or history or rehabbing houses...
- The highest form of knowledge to be interested in is God and the Catholic Faith
- The greatest skill is Holiness through prayer and virtue.
- The important point is that friends are united in wanting, pursuing, and delighting in something beyond each other.
- Friends do and talk about things that go primarily beyond themselves.

Teresa of Avila knew that it was very difficult to make progress spiritually without the help of friends. For this reason, she made it a priority to spend time with four friends to whom she wrote:

“I should like the five of us who at present love each other in Christ to make a kind of pact that since the others in these times gather together in secret against God His Majesty to prepare wicked deeds and heresies, we might seek to gather together some time to free each other from illusion and to speak about how we might mend our ways and please God more since no one knows himself as well as others who observe him if they do so with love and concern for his progress.”

### **The Small Group is the Primary Unit of Transformation**

The small group is the unit of transformation because it is where we are known, challenged, and supported.

Teresa asked for a commitment from her four friends:

- “to free each other from illusion
- “to speak about how we might mend our ways and please God more
- “since no one knows himself as well as others who observe him
- “if they do so with love and concern for his progress.”

We commit to a family or a little group of people with whom we share life regularly to enrich each other with our strengths and stretch one another by our differences.

Like Teresa of Avila, we all need spiritual friendship; we all need a small group of family or friends with whom we commit to share life and share our faith regularly to enrich each other by our strengths and stretch one another by our differences.

# The Family is the Model of Spiritual Friendship

The Christian family is the fundamental cell of the Body of Christ, the Church.

- Husband and wife come together for the mission of having and raising children for the kingdom of God
- The members of the family want, pursue and delight in God, prayer and the practice of virtue

Both the individual believer and the parish Church need small communities for both to flourish.

In his letter entitled *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, St. John Paul II wrote, “[T]he future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home” (par. 52). He did not say it depends on the parish priest doing more or that it depends on new and better programs but on the Church gathered as families or small groups in the home.

St. John Paul II states that Christian families “not only receive the love of Christ and become a saved community, but they are also called upon to communicate Christ’s love to their brethren, thus becoming a *saving community*” (par. 49).

He also states: “Thus, far from being closed in on itself, the family is by nature and vocation open to other families and to society and undertakes its social role” (par. 42). And what is that Social Role of the family? It has primarily two parts: to practice ***hospitality*** and ***prayer***.

On hospitality he writes:

“In particular, note must be taken of the ever greater importance in our society of hospitality in all its forms, from opening the door of one’s home and still more of one’s heart to the pleas of one’s brothers and sisters...In a special way the Christian family is called upon to listen to the Apostle’s recommendation: ‘Practice hospitality,’ and therefore, imitating Christ’s example” (par. 44).

Make hospitality your special care.

On the second, the prayer of the family or small community, St. John Paul II encourages all to make the Rosary the prayer of the domestic Church (par. 60, 61).

St. John Paul II is essentially saying that the future of evangelization depends upon families and small groups who live a simple way of life of hospitality, friendship, good conversation, and the Rosary.

## What steps should we take if we desire spiritual friendship?

Focus on the good things of reality because that is what we want to pursue and delight in together.

- Cut out the things that are killing your spiritual life – basically the time we spend on screens: T.V, Netflix, Face Book, You Tube, news, sports, Candy Crush, and porn.
- Replace it with what your soul really needs – friendship with God that comes through daily meditation.
- And since your soul was meant to be fed by reality in the form of truth, beauty, and goodness, then dedicate yourself to grow in some field of knowledge or skill and then be disciplined in cultivating or appreciating that field.
- Then when you find someone who is also interested in pursuing and celebrating some profound aspect of reality, *we must prioritize spending time with them.*

## Taking Back Sundays

- Delight in God, the Supreme Good, and all the good he has done for us at Mass.
- Delight in the goodness of your family and friends.
- Delight in the goodness of creation.
- Delight in the goodness of those who have no one to delight in them.