

We were born for communion. From our earliest years, our hearts long for

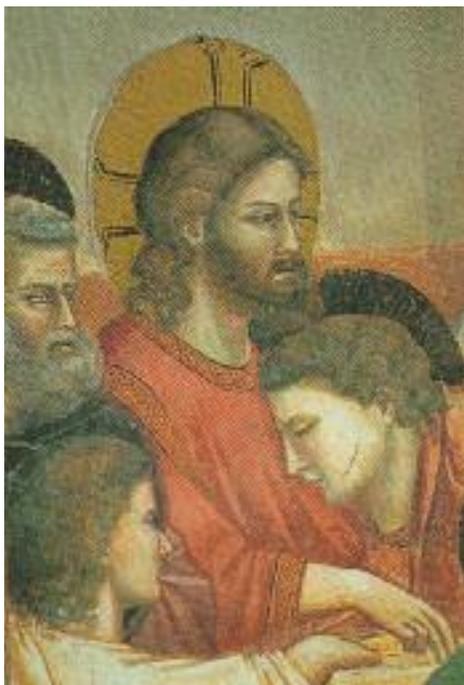
friendship



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The friendship that totally and forever satisfies the human heart

CHRIST & YOU



True love is what we are made for.

Made in the image and likeness of the Blessed Trinity, each of us is literally made for communion – an intense love of total, mutual self-gift. This is why we long to be known, to be understood, to be accepted as we are, able to receive from the heart of another and to give completely the whole of one's heart to that same other with abandon. This is why it is so easy for us to experience loneliness in the absence of love, and this same reason is why it is even possible to experience loneliness in the presence of a beautiful human love. Only the infinite communion of being known, loved and awaited by God is sufficient enough to satisfy, completely and forever, the human heart.

But it is other human persons, precisely because each is a unique reflection of God, who lead us to the communion for which we're made. As we attempt true love, the image of God within us is more and more recognizable, and the love of our friends becomes more evidently a mirror of Divine love. Like our friends the Saints, our love can begin to look more like the love of Jesus. We can accept people more readily, receive them more fully, forgive them more completely, see their great potential, trust them with our own hearts, and walk with them at their own pace.

Last February, Dr. Bernard Nathanson went home to God. Born into a secular Jewish family, Dr. Nathanson called himself an agnostic for most of his life. He became a medical doctor, ran one of the largest abortion clinics in the country and was one of the founders of what is now known as NARAL pro-choice America. He admitted that he was responsible for at least 63,000 abortions, including that of his own child. His views on abortion began changing when he could see through a sonogram what was happening to the baby in the womb, and gradually he became a staunch advocate for life, speaking across the country, but he remained an agnostic. Joan Andrews Bell is well known in the pro-life movement. She has been arrested over 200 times for non-violent protests at abortion clinics. Her whole life has been marked by this passion. During one of her longer stints in jail, another pro-life activist, Chris Bell, came to bring her communion. They met in the presence of Jesus in jail and ended up getting married. Soon after, Joan became pregnant with their only biological child, and she asked Dr. Nathanson to be the one to deliver – to shepherd - her daughter into the world. It was only a few years later that Bernard Nathanson asked Joan Andrews Bell to be his Godmother – to shepherd him - as he was baptized into the Catholic Church.

The Lord treats us the same way – when we come back to Him, He trusts us with what is most precious to Him. As we receive the gift He entrusts to us, we see — sometimes for the first time — the truth that we are good, and made for the good, that we can love and are made for love. We know we are safe in His gaze; that we have come home. This is the friendship that sets us free.

Know that we thank God for the friends He has given us in you, and we pray His love and peace may be the gift given to you and your loved ones as together we follow Him along the way of life. Have a blessed Spring!

Mother Agnes Mary, S.V.

The Sisters of Life will be going to World Youth Day in Madrid, Spain, this summer. Co-hosting the Love and Life Centre with the Knights of Columbus, we will be sharing this newsletter with thousands of young pilgrims from around the world. We hope you enjoy this special edition!

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What makes a true friendship?

Friendship seems to be one of the most natural joys of life.

Childhood friendships are among our earliest memories. We desire companionship, to share our life with another, and yet experience tells us that it is not as easy as it looks. At Villa Maria Guadalupe, when we have events for families, the house and yard become abuzz with children running around and playing. Inevitably, at some point, screaming and crying breaks out, "Mine! Mine!" as two little ones wrestle for a truck or toy. In order to enjoy friendship we first need to be taught what it takes to be a friend.

The ancients pondered this question and wrote treatises on it because it holds the key to human happiness. With a friend all things are made sweet. I can endure hardship and trials because of the encouragement and support my friend supplies; like shining stars they pierce the darkness and lift my heart and spirit. And in good times their presence seems to magnify the joy and goodness of life. But what does it take to be a true friend?



There are many people who we call friends: childhood and school friends, coworkers and neighbors, and then there is that small group of good friends and maybe a best friend that we cherish as another self. Aristotle helps sort through these various relationships. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* he distinguishes three types of friendships: those based on pleasure, those based on usefulness or utility and those based on the mutual pursuit of virtue or the "good life." Of the first two we have had plenty of experience, but it is the third type that we long for and consider to be true friendship.

All friendship involves two people who mutually desire some kind of good for each other. The type of good the friends are seeking determines the depth of the friendship. Within a friendship of pleasure the good-will I bear towards my friend can be sincere, but our relationship is primarily based on a desire to have a good time together. Friendships of utility often occur in working relationships in which each derives some benefit from the other. These relationships bring happiness into our day-to-day living, but tend to be transitory and unstable, because the qualities that make another fun to me and the circumstances that give rise to mutually beneficial relationships can easily change. The true friendship we desire is based on willing the good of

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the other person for his or her own sake, not on what I get out of it. Virtuous or true friendship can grow from a relationship based on pleasure or utility, but it requires more of both parties involved - a recognition that a person is never to be used, a capacity for self-giving and a common pursuit of the higher goods in life. I need to develop the ability to be other-centered, to be able to go beyond seeking my own personal desires and fulfillment in order to seek the good of my friend. His or her good becomes my good and vice-versa.

This ability to transcend myself for another doesn't just happen. It requires instruction, effort and the strength called virtue. A virtue is a habit, a firm disposition or ability to perform a good action that is gained over time, through practice. For a true friendship to develop it must be based on virtue, willed, and reciprocated. How do I know what is good for my friend? First I need to discover what is truly good in life, what the purpose of life is (friendship is not as easy as it looks), and then I can determine how to best reach that goal with my friend at my side. Jesus reveals that love is the ultimate good and the end to which all human perfection consists. The other goods that I pursue in life can be judged as helps or hindrances as they draw me and my friend closer or

"Only true friendship with God will break the bonds of loneliness from which our fragile humanity suffers and will establish a true

further away from our ultimate goal of loving as God loves. This can be tricky business since love, like friendship, can mean many different things. For example, I love my dog, I love coffee ice cream, I love to help others and I love my Mom. However, the time devoted to discovering how to rightly order those things that I love is well spent and will keep my friendship on the right path.

A true friend is someone with whom I can share my life someone who sees me not just as I am but as I could be. With the eyes of love they affirm my uniqueness, see my potential, draw out the best, and inspire me to become more than I would have been on my own. A friend helps me become my best self. At some point, I become filled with gratitude for this special person and realize that there is a deeper reality at work in our relationship. I experience Christ loving me through my friend in a very personal and real way. And recognize the encouragement, kindness and compassion of my friend are tangible expressions of God's particular concern and love for me. This gift overflows within me and I am drawn to offer it to others.

A 12th century English monk, St. Aelred of Rievaulx, wrote a little book on spiritual friendship that provides indispensable advice for those of us today who are forging friendships in the digital age. He outlines four steps leading to the perfection of friendship: "The first is choice, the second testing, the third acceptance and the fourth the highest agreement in things divine and human with a certain charity and good will." St. Aelred goes on to make an important distinction between the universal love that Jesus calls us to enter into as His friends, even for our enemies, and the love of friendship that can only be extended to a few. "Not everyone we love should be welcomed into friendship, because not all are suitable. Since a friend is the partner of your soul, to whose spirit you join and link your own and so unite yourself as to wish to become one from two, to whom you commit yourself as to another self, from whom you conceal nothing, from whom you fear nothing, surely you must first choose, then test, and finally admit someone considered right for such a trust. For friendship should be steadfast, and by being unwearied in affection, it should present an image of eternity."

Friendship is a sacred trust, a gift that should not be given to another lightly. It doesn't happen with the click of a mouse, it takes time to grow and develop. Aristotle noted that true friendship is rare because virtuous people are rare. Unfortunately, in our fast-paced culture, we tend to live on a superficial level. In our longing for true friendship, we can be tempted to take shortcuts and entrust ourselves to others prematurely, before they have proved to be trustworthy. Friendship, like a good wine, matures

and lasting communion with others" -Pope Benedict XVI



slowly over many years. Little by little we share ourselves, our hopes, struggles, fears and dreams; and our friend accompanies us through them all with their presence, by listening, with words of encouragement, advice and through thoughtful acts of kindness.

One of the great blessings of the Christian life is that our friendships remind us that we are never alone. Jesus, our true and eternal friend, is always with us. All it takes is a word spoken silently in our heart to make His Presence known. He will never fail or abandon us. He stands as the source, support and example for all friendship: *"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.... Love one another as I love you."*

(To learn more about true friendship read John Cuddeback's book, *Friendship: Where Virtue Becomes Happiness*; Epic Publishing.)

SV Charism of Life

Every human person is unique and unrepeatable and was created out of the infinite love of God. Each of us came from God and is destined to live with Him forever. Because we are created out of and for love, we find the meaning of our lives in making a total self-gift, through giving and receiving love. The inseparable link between life and love is deeply rooted in the life-giving love of the Trinity and is reflected in religious life and in marriage where total self-giving generates new life.



Despite all the technology, we know that there is nothing like a face to face conversation with a loved one. It is an important part of our nature as human beings to make a gift of ourselves to another, and to see that gift received in the flesh. One of the greatest gifts we can offer a friend is our time and undivided attention.

The irreplaceable gift of presence

The ingenuity of modern man is incredible. Today's technological advances have opened new horizons that were previously unknown and frankly, more vast than our wildest imaginings. We have grown accustomed to and have come to rely on the instantaneous transmission of words, sounds, and images around the world. We are living through a period of widespread cultural transformation, driven by the forces of cell phones and internet based social communications networks.

Sociologists have noted the strong comparison between the way the industrial revolution changed society in the last century and how new technologies are shaping the way people communicate in our day.

Many have benefitted from the positive effects of technology and have recognized that if used wisely, as Pope Benedict recently said, "technology can contribute to the satisfaction of the desire for meaning, truth and unity which remain the most profound aspirations of each human being." Many have found their spouses through online social networks and others have reconnected with old friends. Families easily stay in contact even if they are spread across the globe. In this period of change, the deep human desires for authentic friendships remain.

Despite all the technology, we know that there is nothing like a face-to-face conversation with a loved one. It is an important part of our nature as human beings to make a gift of ourselves to another and to see that gift received in the flesh. One of the greatest gifts we can offer a friend is our time and undivided attention. This is a common language of love that everyone senses: everyone from the three year old who requires the attention of everyone in the room before he will begin his



a cappella performance of the alphabet, to the elderly woman who is a deep well of wisdom that would readily be given to a listening ear.

Parents, educators, and men and women in the business world are beginning to ask important questions, "Is every use of communication technology a good?" And, "Do we need to set up some common practices or boundaries to guide their use?" For many, work demands a certain availability that requires almost instantaneous responses to phone calls and emails. Some are now asking, "How does this experience of communication affect me and my personal life? Is it possible for me to be truly present at home?" Are we using technology in a way that we are in control of it, or are we being driven by the demands of the technologies themselves? Are there ways we can retain what is helpful and eliminate the factors that inhibit true dialogue and communion?

Parents want to be able to get ahold of their teens in an instant. With that said, however, who else is able to reach them now, desiring the same instantaneous response, at any hour night or day? Personal cell phones make it almost impossible for parents to regulate or monitor the company their children keep, and so the boundaries that once made a home a sanctuary are crumbling. Parents who have noticed their children spending hours each night on the internet are setting limits. One practice some families have made is to turn everything off for two hours each night or to take a Sabbath from technology: one day a week cell phones and computers are turned off in the home and the family spends time together. A mother of three teenagers commented, "We try to really have meaningful conversations with our children around the dinner table, I see more and more that it's a sacred time for our family that is so easily interrupted."

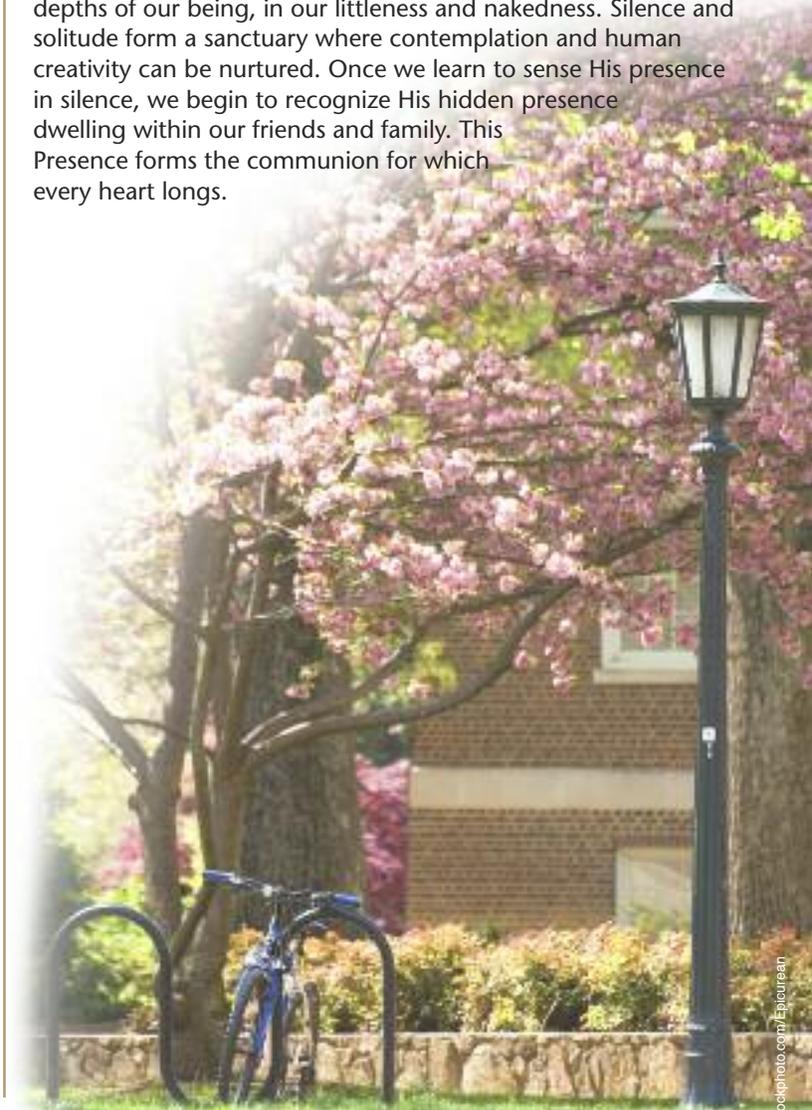
Educators have noticed that technology and video games have begun to shape the way young people think and engage the world. Because young people use cell phones and the internet during a developmental stage of growth and maturation, it is noticed that they have an increased difficulty in concentrating, a lack of ability to hold face-to-face conversations or to engage and resolve daily challenges and difficulties independently. In some cases, the young have lost a sense of wonder for the created world; children are more likely to spend time playing video and computer games than to be outside playing sports or games with each other.

The recently founded Wyoming Catholic College had the unique opportunity to form their policies and principles with technology in mind. They were not simply playing catch-up and allowing technology to shape student life, but rather they looked to classic principles of friendship and human interaction to inform how they would incorporate technology into the campus life. Wisely weighing the benefits against the drawbacks, the administration came to the decision to have a cell phone free campus, to counter the trend often seen in our culture of people being connected to everyone except for the person who is before them. An administrator commented, "Rather than finding this policy restrictive, the students love it." We know that it's important for students to be in touch with their families, so we offer free long distance in the dorm rooms." Recognizing the internet as an incredible tool for research yet seeing its dangers, particularly the millions of pornographic sites that are easily and at times unwillingly accessed, the college decided to have internet access available



only in public places such as the library. The results are remarkable; the students form deep bonds of friendship with each other and develop their intellect in creative ways. They have the space to contemplate the beauty of the world around them and to give birth to new ideas. There is a revival of arts and music and a simple appreciation of natural beauty.

In an age of change, there is something timeless about a face-to-face conversation with a friend and the love shared by people who enjoy being together. The Changeless One still speaks in silence, and He still comes to us in the flesh. He loves us in the depths of our being, in our littleness and nakedness. Silence and solitude form a sanctuary where contemplation and human creativity can be nurtured. Once we learn to sense His presence in silence, we begin to recognize His hidden presence dwelling within our friends and family. This Presence forms the communion for which every heart longs.



My five hundred most intimate friends

The world of facebook



Welcome Jason, you have 10 friend requests

News feed

- All Friends
- Family
- Facebook

Applications

- Photos
- Links
- Video
- More



We want to know and to be known, to see and to be seen. There is something to be said about the real need in our lives for human friendship. It is an odd thing, that with all the varied methods that connect us with others, many people find themselves feeling lonelier, with a sense of isolation and inadequacy. Though unintended, the overuse or misuse of the word “friend” may be skewing the understanding of reality in the minds of young people, who are presently developing crucial skills of making and maintaining friendships while learning them in a superficial and virtual world.



Take for example the phenomena of Facebook. There are 500 million people on Facebook. That’s right, about 1/14th of the world’s population! Each person with an account has a number of “friends.” Now, who are these friends? The list may include your best friend from high school, your girlfriend, your ex-girlfriend, a kid from your third grade class, a guy you met at a party, a cousin you see at reunions, a professor from college, and your Mom. Now, this should be cause for pause---these relationships vary dramatically, one from another! What is shared with one shouldn’t necessarily be shared with another. Not to mention the fact that it is humanly impossible to maintain deep and lasting friendships with 500 people. Further, we create an image of ourselves out of our desire to be known, understood, seen as totally unique and interesting and with a life filled with purpose. Then we try to keep it up. But a key to understanding friendship is the recognition that vulnerability is inevitable for it to be truly authentic, which requires a foundation of trust, which takes time and effort to build. Without this, we can constantly turn inward and make judgments on our identity by how we perceive others perception of us.



One person described her experience in this way: “I just keep going through my ex-boyfriend’s page. I look at all his pictures. I see his new girlfriend, and compare myself to her. I get depressed and jealous.” Another, “Everything is instant. I click on one thing, and that leads me to another. I search for hours, and for whatever reason, feel more empty than when I started. I get up from the computer glazed over and exhausted!” Information about one’s personal life is meant to be a gift, given intentionally to a particular person. By posting the same intimacies about one’s life for all to see, we can end up feeling misunderstood, judged, or of little importance when we do not receive the response we intended or hoped for. For example, the posting of one’s status: “I’m having a bad day.” This could mean, “My parents are getting a divorce,” or “My hair is doing something weird” or “I failed a test.” Our heart goes out into the nothingness of the worldwide web, where we wait with bated breath for someone, anyone who is willing, to take the time to acknowledge us and



do they help to bring out our best self?

A good friend is someone who is honest with me. If I'm making bad choices he calls me on it. I trust him. There aren't many people willing to stick their neck out in that way.

-Pete
New York, NY

I just don't take myself too seriously when I am with my best friend. She helps me keep things in perspective and she can pretty much pull me out of any bad mood.

-Margaret
Cologne, Germany

I've learned from experience that true friendship grows over time and space. My dearest and closest friends are those who have seen me through changes in my life even from across the ocean. When I finally see these friends again after months apart, it is as though no time has passed."

-Alicia Rome, Italy

I've had many friends. However, there have only been a few that have really stood by me through thick and thin. I know this unconditional friendship is rare and I thank God for them.

-Sandra
Motueka, New Zealand

We've known each other since we were kids. We think alike and we value the same things -- we know what matters in life. He has faith and I know that I can trust him with anything.

-Mike
Madrid, Spain

express their care. Is this really what we want for ourselves? For our children?

St. Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is man fully alive." We were created to live life to the full. In order to experience this fullness of life, we need to be awake and present to reality with our whole self: touching, seeing, listening, hearing, feeling and reflecting on what is happening around us and within us. Today many people live in a constant state of preoccupation, more concerned with how they will document what they are experiencing rather than living the present moment. Too often people experience the most important moment of their lives through the screen of their camera or cell phone. They have captured the moment in a picture but never really experienced it themselves.

When used as they are intended, as instruments or tools, social networks can be a wonderful way of organizing groups, spreading the word about events, and keeping in touch with friends. But it simply can't stop there. Friendship requires personal presence and sacrifice. It makes demands on our time and energy. It is an invaluable treasure to have company on the journey of life, to share, to relate, to be challenged and to grow.



World Youth Day: Madrid, Spain

Virtually, it is a reality...the World's Youth, face to face.

When we say face to face, we aren't kidding. In August over two million youth from around the world will descend upon Madrid, Spain to pray, celebrate and engage the most pressing questions of the human heart with Pope Benedict XVI.

Throughout WYD in Madrid, the Sisters of Life and the Knight of Columbus will be hosting the Love and Life Centre: A Home for English Speaking Pilgrims, at the Palacio de Deportes, a 15,000-seat sports stadium from **August 16 - August 20th**.

There will be a packed schedule of concerts, talks, exhibits and opportunities for prayer. We invite the youth of the world to meet us there along with our various co-sponsors: Holy Cross Family Ministries, the Apostleship of Prayer, the Pontifical John Paul II Institute, Salt + Light Television, Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), and World Youth Alliance. Join the WYD Rosary Campaign at: www.FirmInFaith.org

Pass it on: www.WYDenglish.org

SV Evangelization Mission

Whether it's speaking to groups of college students or walking through the streets of New York, the Sisters spread the message of the Gospel of Life that proclaims the incomparable dignity of the human person and the truth that each of us is sacred and loved with an infinite love that exceeds every human expectation. These truths allow us to look into every person and see the face of Christ Himself.

photo by istockphoto



*Encounters that
change you in an
instant.*

JUANITA'S STORY

Juanita: It was a random accident that landed me in North Central Hospital. I had taken a fall and went to find out what was causing the swelling in my arm. They decided to keep me there for a time and everything within me protested, "What? I don't want to stay in the hospital! Why am I here God? I want to go home...."

But then a thought came to me. It's ridiculous that they're holding me this long. I must be here for a reason. With a little more peace of mind, I decided to start talking to people in the hospital ward where I was staying. I walked next door and began to visit with my elderly neighbor. From there, I was inspired to seek out many others who were feeling lonely and frustrated... like me!

Now, I knew there was a Mass held downstairs at noon, and decided to go. I began my journey to the elevator. At the time, I kept my hair back in braided corn rows, with long extensions. A woman called out to me from her room, "Wow; your hair is pretty." I stepped back to peer in at this friendly greeting, and was shocked to see the smiling face of a young woman who was so sickly in appearance. She looked like she had some contagious disease, and my first instinct was to retreat! But there was something about her; she had reached out to me. I told her I was on my way to Mass there at the hospital. She asked me to pray for her. "I'm dying," she said simply. I didn't know what to say to that. She looked like she wanted to talk to someone, anyone. Thinking for a moment, I told her, "I will be right back here to see you after Mass."



There are moments in life that leave lasting impressions, when the heart seems flooded by every human emotion, left rent by glory. They are encounters that change you in an instant, allowing you the chance to "taste and see" that the Lord is good. Sr. Bethany Madonna

had this experience when she first met Juanita. Hers is a story of an unexpected friendship, of redemptive suffering and salvation, and the mysterious unity within the Body of Christ, the interconnectedness of His members.

I prayed to God, "What am I supposed to do for her? You sent me someone I can't help!" It's strange to explain, but a great sense of peace came over me, like God was taking over. When I returned to her room, she told me she was five months pregnant and scheduled for an abortion the very next day. Sirens went off in my head and I said to Jesus, "You know I'm not having that!" Now I knew why I was here.

So I asked her, "Why are you having an abortion?" The young woman described the pressures she was under because of her physical condition. Once again, I didn't know what was prompting me, but I felt the urge to go back to my room. "Let me find something for you, hold on." I said. I knew I needed to give her something that would bring her hope.

Unbeknownst to me, while I was at Mass, my good friend John had stopped by for a visit. He had just attended a pro-life conference and seeing I wasn't there, had left me some pamphlets to read and pass on to my grandchildren. They were sitting right on the bedside table, and when I saw them, I was certain they had dropped down from heaven! The one on top had an unborn baby sucking its thumb on the cover, and I looked at the photo caption: In the womb, 5 months. Seeing it, I knew it was the answer to my prayer and thanked God silently.

I took it to Debbie, and showed it to her. I pointed to the cover. "That's your baby." That's all I could think to say! She looked at it intently and said quietly, "That's my baby?" It was so innocent, so childlike. I'll never forget it. "Help me up," she said. She had an IV, and needed help walking. We went right over to the nurse's station. She said to the nurse behind the desk, pamphlet in hand, "This is my baby...and I'm not having an abortion tomorrow." The nurse began to discourage her, saying all sorts of things, "But you're so sick." In her defense, I said as gently as I was able, "Excuse me...she's made the decision. That baby is moving around, sucking its thumb, with a heartbeat and everything." And we turned and walked away together.

I was so proud of her. I told her, "I have a friend and he'll know what we can do." So I called John. He then told me that he had left the pamphlets in my room. I was sure angels had come to visit! John put us in touch with the Sisters of Life, and two Sisters began visiting Debbie regularly.

As I went to visit Debbie every day in the hospital, all of my fears, especially of allowing myself to be so close to someone I knew I would soon lose...were met with graces only the Lord could provide. One day her mother came and was cleaning her, and I jumped right in to help. I know that was God- I could never do anything like that. I knew that God had taken over and I didn't care about my interior reaction. This went on for four months. After I left the hospital, we would talk on the phone. We'd read the Bible and discuss it. She would talk about her boyfriend, how he was far from God, and asked that I pray for him. I wanted to help her to be happy and ready when the

Lord called her to Himself.

When I look at all the events surrounding our friendship, it wasn't something I could have planned. Debbie knew she had been changed; she knew this was a miracle. Before, she had some sense of God, of her Catholic faith, but was not practicing it at all. After this experience, she was ready to turn everything around. She decided she wanted to be reconciled with God. A priest came and she went to confession, and soon began to receive Holy Communion.

Finally the long awaited day arrived, and she gave birth to a perfectly healthy, beautiful baby boy. She named him Joseph. She wanted him to be baptized there at the hospital, and asked if I would be his Godmother. And the Godfather? John, of course!

Two weeks later, Debbie passed away. She was so thankful to God. She told me that she loved me. She left me her bible and her diary, where she had written some songs. I was very close to her.

Sr. Bethany: *At this point, I looked into Juanita's eyes and said: "You saved two lives...his physical life and her spiritual life. Debbie was preparing for death during her pregnancy, and you spared her the suffering of abortion, and so much sorrow." Juanita smiled back at me and through brilliant tears replied, "I know ... I've suffered."*

Juanita: I knew that I had to tell her, "You don't have to do this!" I knew her fears. The moment she told me that she was scheduled for an abortion, I remembered the pain of losing a child. And the regret...you never know what that child could have been in your life. I didn't want her to lose her child, to have in her memory, her conscience, the burden that I had carried for so long. It was a gift from God for me; He was helping me to come to terms with my own abortion through her.

Sr. Bethany: *"Juanita, you were a true friend to Debbie and a spiritual mother to her baby. You responded to a grace." Her face beamed with a radiance that knew Mercy, and taking my hands in hers, she said, "This is the God you love."*



SV Hope and Healing Mission for those suffering abortion

Women often suffer silently and alone, perhaps out of the fear of being judged or misunderstood. United with Jesus, who makes all things new, Sisters seek to extend God's mercy through a confidential outreach of supportive retreats, conversation, and accompaniment. If you would like to speak with a Sister or to receive information on retreats please call: 866.575.0075 or email the Sisters at hopeandhealing@sistersoflife.org

There are no blackberries, ipods or cell phones in everyone's purses. We don't have purses. (just one very large pocket that can carry an unbelievable variety of items!) We do use computers, but only during certain times of the day, for the apostolate. And the answering machine is put on while we are in prayer. Make no mistake, we do love to communicate! It's just that we know ourselves and know what we desire, and the only right response to both is to set boundaries so that we might be free: free to spend time with Christ, free to be present to each other, free to think and to see the deeper meaning of what is happening all around us. In short, to be truly present, with undistracted hearts, to the beauty and grace that surrounds us each moment of the day.

It is in this context, that deep friendships are formed and a family of Sisters in the Lord finds its home.





*Without even saying a word
you know you'll have the
support of all your Sisters.
That's why we tell the
women we serve,
"we're all in this together."*

-Sr. Bridget of Jesus

A DOORWAY TO COMMUNION

friendship in Community

Community life
is a school of love.

As each sister enters into the process of the transformation of heart that will free her to love universally and to the end, she becomes painfully aware of her deficiencies: impatience, stubbornness, selfishness, irritability.... For some the first reaction is, "I gotta get out of here. I used to be such a nice person. I don't know what happened."

This is one of those great moments in the spiritual life when you either turn back and settle for mediocrity or surprisingly realize that this feeling of inadequacy is actually an invitation to embrace one's utter dependency on Christ. Jesus invites us to become more than we could possibly dream of on our own. Our destiny is to love without limits.

Cardinal O'Connor never tired of reminding us that only the Eucharistic Christ can form us into a community. It is in and through the power of Eucharistic, self-giving, sacrificial love that our hearts are educated, healed, and set free. This is why all of our apostolic efforts take place within the context of community. We are convinced that Eucharistic love is the most powerful force in the world. Through our various missions we provide an opportunity for others to enter into an environment that is permeated by this mysterious Presence and to experience in the love they encounter the living Christ.



*Because we're able to entrust
our vulnerability to each
other; it's real life.
It's discovering yourself.
Sisters forgive each other,
love each other. This
"friendship in community"
is how Jesus is real to us.*

-Sr. Joan Marie



*We need to share with each
other because the mission can be
stressful and intense. Sharing
the joys and sorrows of the day
helps me enter more deeply into
prayer. You never feel alone in
the mission. -Sr. Rita Marie*



*There isn't competition.
When a Sister has a gift
you want to rejoice in it,
because it builds up family.*

-Sr. Dorothy Guadalupe

TO SEE AS GOD SEES

To see and reverence the goodness and beautiful potential that lies deep within every soul.

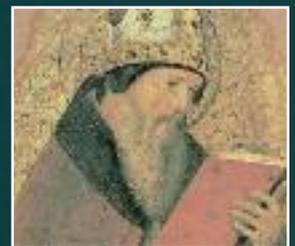
Great Love



There are certain images of the more recent Saints who, from pictures, seem to be looking right into our souls.

St. Therese, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, St. Maximilian Kolbe – it's as if they can see a potential in us that we do not yet even see, and their kind look is at once an encouraging exhortation and a reminder of the greatness to which we're called. That's what friends are for, and it's a consolation to know we have such faithful ones in heaven. Friends who are close to the Lord, whether they are with Him in Heaven or following Him on earth, have the happy tendency of seeing us as God sees us, with all the potential and responsibility that implies, and of loving us with His love, which amazes us and sets us free to follow the same path and pattern of true love.

friendship



Prayer is the bond between souls. - Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity



Sometimes our friendship with God grows gently over a lifetime. At other times it begins with a striking experience of the beauty and goodness in life or of creation. Frequently, it is in moments of suffering that we experience God's presence and light breaking into our lives and with it an invitation to enter into His friendship. God reaches down into our darkness and pain and offers a hand, a way out. Sometimes it requires an act of trust, a leap of faith, at other times His presence is so tender and consoling that following Him seems easy, even irresistible. If we place our hand in His and begin to walk with Jesus, we find our lives begin to change. We want to be better so that we can receive more of Him, and His love draws us out of the narrow confines of ourselves. Gradually our hearts become purified and we find that we are less self-absorbed and more other-centered. Before we know it, what began as a spark has grown into a fire in our hearts.

Now there is no turning back. After tasting *Godiva* there is no going back to *Hershey's* without an awareness of what you are missing. Once we have tasted the sweetness of God's love, our desire for greater union grows until this friendship becomes the defining and driving force in our life. Friendship with God gives us the freedom to let go of the fears and grasping that keep us from opening up to Jesus and receiving all that life brings as a gift and mystery to be lived with Him.

The saints are the great friends of God. By reading about their lives we gain insight into the particularity with which God loves each of us.

with God

For years St. Augustine ran from God, after finally surrendering to His grace, he wrote: "Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness, I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness... You touched me, and I burned for your peace. When once I shall be united to you with my whole being, I shall at last be free of sorrow and toil. Then my life will be alive, filled entirely with you."



After falling out of her carriage into the mud, St. Teresa of Avila complained to Jesus at being treated in this way while trying to serve Him. The voice of Jesus then came to her: "This is how I treat my friends, Teresa." Wiping the mud from her face, she replied, "No wonder you have so few!"

NATIONAL PRAYER FOR LIFE CAMPAIGN

Let us put our faith into action by praying together the Prayer for Life each day for a restoration of a sense of the sacredness of all human life. To join the National Prayer for Life Campaign go to: www.NationalPrayerForLife.org

Eternal Father, Source of life
Open our hearts to see and desire the beauty of your plan for life and love. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that our love will be generous and self-giving and we may be blessed with joy. Grant us great trust in your mercy. Forgive us for not receiving your gift of life and heal us from the effects of the culture of death. Instill in us and in all people a sense of the sacredness of every human life. Inspire our efforts to protect and care for the most vulnerable especially women who are pregnant and their unborn children the sick and the elderly. Strengthen us in the hope that with you nothing is impossible. We ask this in the name of Jesus who by his Cross makes all things new. Amen.

**Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Mother of Life, Pray for us.**



At 14 years old, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton wrote: "I set off in the woods, soon found an outlet in the meadow; and a chestnut tree with several young ones growing around it, found rich moss under it and a warm sun. Here then, was a sweet bed — the air still a clear blue vault above — the numberless sounds of a spring melody and joy. God was my Father, my all. I prayed, sang hymns, cried, laughed, talking to myself of how far He could place me above all sorrow. Then I laid still to enjoy the heavenly peace that came over my soul; and I am sure, in the two hours so enjoyed, grew ten years in the spiritual life...."

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