

5 Characteristics of Friendship from Pope Francis

For the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter on 22 February, we offer five characteristics of friendship taken from the writings of Pope Francis during his years as Saint Peter's successor.

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C. S. Lewis, in his book *The Four Loves*, said that friendship “is the

instrument by which God reveals to each of us the beauties of others.”

Listed in bold below are five characteristics of friendship taken from Pope Francis' writings, with a brief reflection on each one:

1. Friendship is a generous, self-giving love, which leads us to seek the true good of our friend (cf. *Christus vivit*, no. 151).

A friend accompanies, encourages, shares with and helps the other person to grow, since one's capacity for self-giving increases. *Since it is a question of discovering and loving the good of the other person, friendship also means suffering with our friends and for our friends* (Fernando Ocáriz, *Pastoral letter*, 1 November 2019, no. 8).

2. Patience and time are needed to forge a good friendship between

two people (cf. Message, 15 September 2015).

At times, the pace of life today can lead us to forget the importance of a good friend: we have to know how to “waste time” with our friends. Each friend is an adventure of getting to know one another, with its high and low points, its joys and sorrows. But like any adventure, it is investing in something worthwhile. *Each person is unique, as is each relationship of friendship* (Fernando Ocáriz, *Pastoral letter*, 1 November 2019, no.8).

3. Even though friends may be quite different from one another, they always share things in common that bring them together (cf. *Christus vivit*, no. 151).

Friendship is like a good movie. It broadens our view of the world when we take the risk of looking at it through the eyes of another person. *Our friends help us to understand*

*ways of viewing life that are different from our own, that enrich our inner world, and, when the friendship is deep, that enable us to experience the world in a different way (Fernando Ocáriz, *Pastoral letter*, 1 November 2019, no. 8).*

4. Friendship is not a fleeting or passing relationship, but rather a stable, firm and faithful bond that matures over time (cf. *Christus vivit*, no. 151).

This faithfulness is attained when we are willing to love others just as they are: not in spite of their weaknesses and defects, but rather because of them, loving the uniqueness of each one's personality. To do so, we need to ask God to give us a heart to the measure of His; in first place to fill my heart more with Himself, and then to help us love all men and women, without ever gossiping about them, knowing how to understand and

pardon the defects of others, since I know how much God puts up with from me (Saint Josemaria, Notes from a family gathering, October 1972).

5. Friendship is so important that Jesus shows us He is our friend. He shows us He is our greatest Friend, who loves us and accompanies us just as we are (cf. *Christus vivit*, no. 153).

Realizing that we have a true friendship with Jesus fills us with confidence, because He is faithful (Fernando Ocáriz, *Pastoral letter*, 1 November 2019, no. 3). This also fills us with joy, a joy we want to share with others. *A Christian's friendship desires the greatest happiness—a relationship with Jesus—for those close to him or her. Let us pray, as Saint Josemaria did, "Give us, Jesus, hearts to the measure of Yours!"* (Fernando Ocáriz, *Pastoral letter*, 1 November 2019, no. 23).

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