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## **The art of encounter**

'Friendship is one of life's gifts and a grace from God. Faithful friends, who stand at our side in times of difficulty, are a reflection of the Lord's love, His gentle and consoling presence in our lives.' These are words of Pope Francis. The Prelate of Opus Dei, Don Fernando, wrote a long letter on Friendship in 2019 prioritizing the need for personal contact with people. The following year, the Holy Father also highlighted the importance of the art of encounter as an aspiration and a style of life.

12/29/2023

Reflecting on these letters, it seemed fitting that the theme of our first seminar in Roshani in 2023 be on Friendship. We were all looking forward to the second Sunday of February having invited our cooperators and those who attend different activities in the centre.

By early afternoon, almost 30 of us had arrived and the living room resounded with greetings and laughter. Annette, our moderator, began by explaining the concept of friendship. Her introduction was rich, interweaving ideas from Scripture, the Letter of the Father and those of the Holy Father.

Afterwards, we formed groups for an interactive work session with thought provoking questions, which

gave rise to lively discussions. “Can we really be friends with God? Is it possible to foster true friendships in the family? Can we have and be true friends in the workplace?” Time flew by, and soon Annette called us to the plenary session.

From the presentations by different groups, it was very clear that we are all facing similar challenges. We are grappling with the nature of our friendships with each other, with our siblings and family members, and how we should care for our aging parents among other important relationships. We also seek to develop mutually respectful and meaningful relationships at the workplace.

As Annette summarized the key points, I particularly liked the reference she made to the friendship between St. Josemaria and Blessed Alvaro. With a variety of literary and

scriptural references, she also highlighted how the depth of our friendship and spiritual intimacy with God is dependent on the quality of time we spend in prayer. In turn, our friendship with Our Lord influences the quality of all the other relationships that we forge in life. She reminded us of the possible ways of fostering closeness with our parents, which had been discussed, such as spending quality time with them and caring for their physical, material and spiritual needs. Winding up, she commented on the need for emotional intelligence and healthy boundaries in our relationships.

As we enjoyed the refreshments served at the end, we were all smiles and full of plans to be more intentional in fostering friendships among ourselves as well by planning more social, professional and

spiritual activities within and outside Roshani.

A.A.

Roshani is a centre of Opus Dei in Nairobi with activities for young professional women. You can find contact details [here](#).

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