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Five Keys to Friendship from Pope Francis

“A friend isn’t just an acquaintance, someone you enjoy passing the time of day with. Friendship is something much deeper.” Some advice from Pope Francis on friendship.

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1. A good friend knows your secrets: Good friends are those we can confide in and open up our heart

to, in order to share with them our joys and sorrows, without fear of being judged. Scripture says: *A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter: he that has found one has found a treasure. There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend* (Sir 6:14-15). But friendship doesn't come about in just one day. As Pope Francis says: "A friend isn't just an acquaintance, someone you enjoy passing the time of day with. Friendship is something much deeper." "Patience is needed to forge a strong friendship between two people. A lot of time talking with one another, spending time together, getting to know one another—that's how friendship is forged. Patience makes a friendship real and solid."

2. A good friend never abandons you: Jesus said: *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (Jn 15:13). Pope Francis insists: "When you love someone, you want to be at their

side, to care for them and help them, to say what is on your mind. But you never abandon them. That's how Jesus is with us; he never abandons us." True friendship is disinterested; it seeks to give rather than to receive. Saint Josemaria gave some clear advice for true friendship: "In my thoughts, words and deeds towards my neighbor, may I never cease to practise charity, or allow indifference to enter my soul" (*Furrow*, 748).

3. A good friend always defends you: "Never allow weeds to grow on the path of friendship. Be loyal" (*Furrow*, 747). Good friends never abandon their friend when difficulties arise; they never speak badly of their friend, or allow that person to be criticized when absent. Pope Francis says: "It is a great joy to be able to put yourself in the shoes of the other person, to embrace and forgive them. We all make errors and mistakes, thousands of them.

Therefore those who can assist others in their errors, in their mistakes, are happy. They are true friends and never abandon anyone.”

4. A good friends doesn't offer you “smoke and mirrors”: Saint Josemaria said: “True friendship also means making a heartfelt effort to understand the convictions of our friends, even though we may never come to share them or accept them (*Furrow*, 746). “Jesus doesn't offer us merely ‘smoke and mirrors,’” says Pope Francis. “He knows that true happiness, a happiness that fills our heart, isn't found in having trendy clothes or smart shoes, or a popular brand. He knows that true happiness means having a sensitive heart, in learning to weep with those who weep, in being close to those who are sad, in hugging someone. A person who doesn't know how to cry doesn't know how to laugh, and therefore how to live. Jesus knows that in this

world of so much envy and aggressiveness, true happiness requires learning how to be patient, to respect others, to not condemn or judge anyone. Jesus wants to bring us the fullness of happiness. He wants to bring us friendship, true friendship, the friendship that we all need.”

5. A good friend always gives you strong support: True friendship means giving our friends the best that we have. And our greatest good, without any comparison, is being friends of Jesus. Pope Francis encourages us to be true friends of our friends, with a friendship like that of Jesus. “Not just remaining among ourselves, but rather heading out onto the ‘court,’ in order to make new friends. You have to spread Jesus’ friendship throughout the world, wherever you may be, at work, when studying, by WhattsApp, Facebook or Twitter. When going to a

dance, or having a good aperitif. Out on the street or playing a game of pick-up basketball. That's where Jesus' friends are. Giving them the conviction that we should be happy, since we have a Father in heaven who loves us."

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