

Developing Supportive Friendships

The Way of Friendship

In this meeting you are going to go on a double date with your parish mentor couple (ideally a short time after your wedding). It doesn't need to be an expensive outing and it should, if possible, involve an activity which makes it possible to talk with each other. It could be as simple as going out for coffee or drinks, going to the park to throw a frisbee around, or having a home cooked meal and playing a board game together. Choose something that you would all actually enjoy doing. The expectation is that you will come up with some ideas and work it out with your parish mentor couple.



Genuine friendship is marked by the combination of freedom and love. In friendship one is free to become, remain, or end the relationship. It would not be a genuine friendship if some form of coercion, pressure, or manipulation were present. Love understood as willing or desiring goodness for/to the other is also essential, even if we might not commonly use this word in this way. Friends are free to enjoy one another's company as often as they choose and they may spend significant amounts of time together, but they don't give their entire life to each other. That is the pledge of marriage and the nature of a covenant. "In this sense, friendship is very different from the commitment one makes in marriage" (*Genuine Friendship*, 53).

Marriage involves the commitment of covenant that goes beyond mere friendship. One still acts with freedom and love, but this is now directed towards the meaning and purpose of the covenant, lifelong and indissoluble union. Like genuine friendship, marriage

Matthew 5:9

**"Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called sons
of God."**

Catechism Note

“The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of Divine Origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it.”

—Catechism, 1718

requires character strength and virtue. You may recall the exercise you did with cards to explore and discuss your character strengths and core values in chapter 5 of Thrive. Building upon the discussions that flowed from this exercise, you might now consider how genuine friendship “requires such traits as honesty, trust, loyalty, goodwill, and sacrifice... to be a friend one must be good – a man or woman of virtue, of character. Aristotle says inner goodness is what makes people appealing... it is what draws us to one another” (Genuine Friendship, page 59). This is the

connection between friendship and marriage. Those who develop the capacity for genuine friendship are able to include this quality of their character to develop the deeper friendship possible within marriage.

To genuinely love another requires that one choose good for the other. This choice involves hope for good for the friend or beloved and actions to help bring it about. It is expressed in service. This is why the Sacrament of Marriage is called a Sacrament of Service. Additionally, it requires trust.

Supportive Friendships

Friendships that support one’s marriage are also essential. Having genuine friends – most often other married couples – is a tremendous help because this provides at least two highly valuable things: 1) friends who are rooting for you and hope for good things for your marriage, and 2) friends who will do something about it through acts of service. This can take the form of a more experienced couple who may have good advice or guidance to offer. Equally valuable are the peers who are heading in the same direction and hold complimentary values that see marriage as a mission. Developing dependable and trustworthy friendships that support your marriage is one of the best ways to surround yourself with community support which is a hallmark of healthy culture and society.

It is important to look now at what relationships will take priority in your new life together. Friends that build up your marriage are an investment in your future. Friends from prior to the time of your marriage who cause division can be very damaging to marital unity and trust.



