

No one can have greater love
than to lay down his life for his friends.
You are my friends
if you do what I command you.
I shall no longer call you servants,
because a servant does not know
his master's business;
I call you friends
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.

Jesus,
You called us your friends.
Help us to learn from you the true
meaning of friendship
as we continue old relationships and
seek out new ones.
We ask this in your name.
Amen.

Reflection/Imagination Exercise

Continue:

Jesus said that we are no longer servants, but friends. A servant is a person who is submissive to another. You may have had relationships where you treat another that way or were treated that way yourself. On the other hand, the word "friend" has roots in a Germanic word that means "to love." Friendships grow to become caring and loving relationships. This is the relationship we are called to have with God, and in turn with one another.

Let's think of some of the people you have called friends. Please make yourselves comfortable. Sit straight in your chairs without straining and put your feet flat on the floor. Shut your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply as I take you through the following remembrances (pause between sentences):

Recall the home and neighborhood you lived in before you went to school. Who were your neighbors? Was there an older person who paid special attention to you? Remember a boy you played with. Was there a girl you played with? What were some of the things you did with these friends? Take a moment to picture your play areas: your homes, your backyards, your neighborhood.

Now remember kindergarten or first grade. Can you remember your teacher? Who were your friends in this class? What did you like about these friends? Are you still close to any of them? Think about a time when you played with one of your school friends after school. Were you at home or at your friend's home? What did you do? What did you like about this person?

As you grew, your friendships changed. Think about a conflict you had with a friend as you approached the junior high years. What caused the conflict? Was the conflict resolved? If so, how? If not, why not? What did this person help you learn about the meaning of friendship?

In your memory, recall the first days of high school. This was another occasion for meeting new friends. What led you to begin a friendship with a person you had not met before? What did you like about this person? Think about a lifelong friend who went a different way as you started high school. What was the cause of this breakup? Do you think you will ever be close again with this person?

Now think of the person you would call your best or closest friend. (Pause for at least thirty seconds.) Why is this the person who comes to mind? What are some characteristics of this person that you admire? What would it mean for you to lay down your own life for this friend? This doesn't have to mean that you would actually be martyred for your friend. Rather, how do you stand by and support this friend? How does this friend support you?

Thank God for your closest friend. Thank God for all of your friends. Thank God for the gift of friendship.