

# Friendships as Men

**Headline:** Modern men are more connected than ever through technology and yet many are profoundly isolated. Work, family obligations, relocation, and the pace of life can quietly erode friendships that once came naturally. God did not create men to carry life's burdens alone. Authentic brotherhood challenges us, strengthens us, sharpens us, and helps lead us toward heaven.

**Objective:** Christian friendship is far more than companionship or shared hobbies. It is a sacred relationship in which men encourage one another toward virtue, challenge one another to greater holiness, and stand together through life's victories and struggles.

Jesus Himself modeled friendship with His disciples. He laughed with them, taught them, corrected them, suffered with them, and entrusted His mission to them. As Catholic men and fathers, we are called to build friendships that reflect this same self-giving love and accountability.

Many men invest heavily in careers, finances, and responsibilities while unintentionally neglecting friendships that nourish the soul. Yet Scripture reminds us that we need brothers who will tell us the truth, pray for us, celebrate with us, and carry our burdens when we cannot carry them ourselves.

Strong friendships also strengthen families, parishes, and communities. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that we are made for communion and solidarity, not isolation or radical individualism. Healthy male friendships become schools of virtue, leadership, service, and discipleship.

The challenge before us is simple but demanding: Are we intentionally building friendships that help us become saints?

**Song Suggestion:** They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love or The Servant Song ("Will You Let Me Be Your Servant")

## Bible and Catechism Readings:

### Proverbs 27:17

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."

### John 15:12-15

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends... I have called you friends."

### Catechism of the Catholic Church 1939

"The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of friendship or social charity, is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood."

### Catechism of the Catholic Church 1829

"The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion."

## Saint: St. Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167)

Often called the "patron saint of friendship," St. Aelred wrote extensively on spiritual friendship. He taught that Christian friendship is one of God's greatest gifts and described it as a relationship where "here we are, you and I, and I hope a third, Christ, is in our midst."

His life reminds us that friendship is not a distraction from holiness but one of the ordinary ways God leads us to it.

**Vignette:** – Mike had plenty of acquaintances but very few friends. Between youth sports, work deadlines, home repairs, and family obligations, years had passed since he had intentionally invested in another man outside his family.

When a health scare shook his world, he realized how isolated he had become. He had people he could text about football scores but almost nobody he could call to pray with him, challenge him, or simply listen.

Reluctantly, he accepted an invitation to Father's Team. Over months, conversations moved beyond sports and careers into struggles, marriages, parenting, faith, and purpose.

One morning, after sharing a burden he had carried silently for years, another man simply said, "You don't have to carry that alone anymore."

Mike later reflected that while he thought he was joining a men's group, what God was really giving him was brotherhood.

### **Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:**

1. Who are the men in your life that sharpen you spiritually, emotionally, and morally? What makes those friendships different?
2. Why is it often difficult for men to develop deep friendships as adults? Which obstacles affect you personally?
3. If a friend loved you enough to challenge an area of your life that needed growth, how would you respond?
4. What practical steps can you take over the next month to intentionally invest in friendship with other Catholic men?

### **Resources:**

1. *Spiritual Friendship* by St. Aelred of Rievaulx
2. *Men of the Word* by Father Nathan Cromly
3. *Into the Breach* by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
4. FORMED studies on discipleship, fraternity, and Catholic men's spirituality
5. Consider participating regularly in Father's Team, a men's Bible study, or a parish service ministry.

### **Action Plan:**

1. Identify one male friendship that needs renewed attention and schedule time together within the next two weeks.
2. Reach out to one man who may be isolated or struggling and invite him for coffee, breakfast, or prayer.
3. Commit to praying weekly for your closest male friends and their families.
4. Invite one friend to Father's Team or another faith-building opportunity this month.

**Author:** Ken Cornish