

The evangelically transforming power of Friendship from the beginning...

The attractive example

Paula's example soon began to have a healthy influence on the entire village. The young, in particular, focusing on that paragon of virtue, began to fix their defects, rid themselves of vanity, attend the Sacraments, and lead a more reserved and edifying life. The most fervent really desired to get closer to Paulinha; but the one who longed to talk to her was a certain Mariana Danero. She herself later used to tell us how she achieved this objective... . (Memories - Sommariva, pp. 15-16)

Conduct so uplifting, so unusual in that zone, meant Paulinha attracted the admiration and esteem of those people, but above all some good young people who, no longer at the age to go to doctrine or to school, desired to get closer to her, to hear her speak, to intimately know her. But, as she did not follow the traditions existing in those rural areas of going out at the end of the afternoon to take fresh air in the street or sitting in the doorway (sometimes doing some work by hand) to see who goes by on the street, humming a song, gossiping with the neighbours about what is happening in the village, based on their own facts and those of others, and was instead always in her home, when not at school or in the church, it became quite difficult for them to satisfy their pious wish. (Memories – Vassallo, pp. 67-68)

(...)Be a true missionary in this house and in this country; preach a lot through good example and little by words; study very much the Holy Heart of Jesus, to learn to practice well all the virtues... . C 708.8

... I greatly recommend, very much, the presence of God, holy withdrawal and efficacious preaching of the good example, which will cater for the fervent instructions that, for now, these good sisters will not be able to hear. C 681, 4

We shall not fail to learn well and practice the very important lesson that Jesus Christ has given us: we first practice all that we want to teach others to practice. The Son of God, Infinite Wisdom, wanting to remove vice from the world and implant in it all his virtues, first exercised them himself for thirty years, and then after preaching them he taught them to others. We shall do the same... C 98.3

From that moment they felt united

By a bond of affectionate and holy friendship

[Mariana Danero]: She appeared to me at that time like a heavenly vision, a kind of superhuman. How she carried herself, her words, how she kindly welcomed us made me experience a satisfaction that I could not explain in words. But my joy came to a head when, telling her my sister that I strongly wanted to talk to her and to sometimes be with her, she kindly replied, turning to me: 'Well yes, come any time you want, that will always make me

happy. If you like, on feast days, after the ceremonies of the church, we may go together to the nearby woods and speak a little of the Lord. Would you like that?'

The following Sunday, after Catechism and the Blessing, Paula met our Mariana and, as agreed, they both headed to Moro Hill where, sitting on the grass in front of a wonderful spectacle of nature and art, they began their holy conversations. They did the same the next Sunday and many others after that. Once, Paula saw a group of young people on a small hill with their eyes fixed on her. "Who are those young people?" She asked Mariana. "They are some of my companions, also very willing to meet you and take part in our conversations." "Call them over here", Paula continued. And those young and happy people all came over in the twinkling of an eye and stood around the one they already loved respectfully. Paula welcomed them affably, encouraged them, invited them to sit down, and even to visit her in the Parish House every time they wanted to talk to her alone. From that moment they felt united by a bond of loving and holy friendship.

Every Sunday, every holy day, that happy group of young people was there taking delight in the beauties of nature and reinvigorating their spirit through good readings, holy conversation, melodious songs of praise to God and his Blessed Mother. And so, the leafy woods and exuberant hills of Quinto became for those girls a true school of perfection. Little by little their hearts were emptied of worldly things and in their place God sowed, as he had done in the heart of Paula, the seeds of a more perfect life. (Memories - Sommariva, pp. 16-17)

Pious Work of Saint Dorothy:

Fraternal charity / Winning hearts / Be guardian angels ...

As pious work is one of fraternal correction, the people who devote themselves to it must not use harsh ways and punishments, nor claim rights and exercise authority, but use good manners and notify through fraternal charity. (Const. 1851, 209)

Finally, with earnest prayer, an edifying, composed and modest exterior, arising from the inner mortification of passions and of peace in the heart, with gentle, affable and engaging ways, they will seek, according to the grace that God grants them, to win the hearts of girls and all people engaged in the Pious Work, and guide them wholly to He for whom they were created. They are well committed to the fact that this should be a characteristic note of the Institute: those who deal with the Sisters once have the desire to find them again. They will more easily achieve it if they have that important lesson taught by the Divine Master printed on their heart and mind, more is achieved by example than with words: Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart. (Const. 1851, 238)

The Co-operators must make use above all of the occasional meetings, which occur naturally outdoors, to learn the state of mind of the young girls, to enter into their heart and become, little by little, their guardian angels.

All are called to never lose sight of those they take under their wing, who they can and should consider the apple of their eye.

The Co-operators must:

- Persuade themselves that the success of the Work, more than their admonitions, depends on their good example;
- In admonitions, let candour, simplicity, caring and above all humility shine through, showing that what drives them to instruct is the spirit of charity and nothing else;
- Focus indifferently on all young women;
- Adapt to the diversity of the nature and inclinations of the young women;
- Reflect in certain difficult circumstances whether it will be better to correct or overlook;
- Avoid anything that might make correction unpleasant and especially what may appear as a failing or undermined piety. (Dialogo sulla Pia Opera di Santa Dorotea, Genova 1861)

Friendship in biblical-theological key

Difference between love and friendship: Love obliges, limited to a face, the humility of what is at hand. In friendship, there is no constraint or domain. Love is full communication of itself, it is a gift and total engagement; in friendship, distance is what allows one to reveal oneself to the other.

Friendship is a passage of time: There comes a time when friends say goodbye and each goes to his house, but this is not a drama for friendship. The essential remains intact even though there is now distance.

Moses the friend of God: Moses and God, friends; a frontal relationship that indicates proximity and reciprocity, the possibility of the divine that speaks a human language. When Moses goes looking for God he knows he will find Him, when God speaks to Moses he knows he will be heard. The light of God makes Moses bright. God does not deceive Moses, it is possible to be before the unfinished of our life in a tranquil manner. Moses died as he had lived, in that lonely and continuous dialogue with the voice that had called to him from the burning bush. The greatest benevolence that the prophet, the friend, lives is the distance from the promised land, being able to see it without reaching it. The price of the prophet's benevolence is to keep alive for all the distance between earth and the promised land. It is the distance that lights up life, it is in this that desires and big dreams feed. Moses died according to the order of the Lord by the mouth of the Lord, kissed by God, his last breath taken by the mouth of God, his friend.

The repose of friendship: Marta, Maria and Lazarus. Bethany, a place to rest, to love, to cry, to greet. Bethany is a place where Jesus goes, to be with his friends and to leave renewed. For Jesus, Bethany represented a break in the normality, a stop, a refresher. We can imagine those places, those houses where we feel truly at home, where we can say, in view of the hospitality of others, that we have finally arrived. Bethany shows us the importance of

friendship in the life of every human being. Bethany shows us how important it is in our life to know how to create friendships, our relations, a place of rest. The silence of Lazarus is at the service of all the relationships of affection he knew how to weave.

The Spirit: The experience of the friendship with God blooming in intimacy with Him. Yet, we do not know where this intimate friendship in the Spirit comes from or where it goes, proximity and distance, familiarity and difference. The Spirit does not leave, but it is not fixed, it does not close itself off, it is always elsewhere. The relationship of friendship is the third party, the third party that prevents fusion, guarantees the difference, who requires an open and decentralised relationship.

I called you my friends – last supper, the meal of the only narrated physical contact between Jesus and the disciples, the body is not free of the friendship. the body is not free of friendship. John 15,12-15. Only the word friend is the only word used to describe those who follow Jesus.

Peter, are you my friend? Yes, my Lord, you know I love you as I can, with a fragile and incomplete love ... Jesus does not ask from Peter what he cannot give. The friend knows how to adapt to our poverty.

The today of friendship – everyday mysticism – today (now) is one of the most frequently used temporal indications in the Gospels. It indicates the urgency and the imminence of what is about to happen. Friendship is not only seen today, it shows itself open to what is about to happen.

Eat together and love imperfections - to heal ourselves of the image of an inalterable, invisible, aseptic God... everything collapses if we imagine Him in a kitchen, while preparing the fish, the coals, while eating at the table with friends ... we need to go beyond the banal perfection. In friendship, imperfection is what allows us to always restart understand the impact of time on the life of others, accept their imperfections and their humanity.

The Gospel of joy and surprise – celebration and free time, God saw that everything was well and stopped. Friendship has to do with suspension, with a space-time for joy and celebration, where we walk, we find, we prepare not to gain something but to go freely to meet others.

Only a friend can betray – betrayal is not just a wound, it is a blow to the very deepest of existence; only those who love can betray. Betrayal is a unilateral violation of the friendship pact.

There is no greater love than to give our life for our friends. The friend is one who is no longer a stranger, but close. The full realization of love is friendship capable of freely giving one's life.

Here I stand at the door, knocking: The friend knows how to knock on the door and wait before entering.