

Christian Friendship: Sharing God's Graces
By Father Anthony Co

Hi, my name is Fr. Anthony and today we're going to talk about one of my favorite topics, Christian friendship.

Over the years I've had a chance to serve at different colleges as a Catholic Chaplain and it's been there that I've met some beautiful witnesses of the faith. And these young men and women who are just 18 or 19 years old, they've shown me how to be a better christian.

And one thing I noticed that was really peculiar, that these devout Catholics who would go to daily mass, who would go to confession periodically, who would not only go to retreats and bible studies, but they would lead retreats and bible studies. They would have such a strong moral life and spiritual life while they were at school. But then, when they would go home to see mom and dad at winter break and summer break, they would have a very difficult time. Their moral life and their spiritual life would start to fall apart.

So, after seeing this a couple of years in a row, I decided to start (and this probably sounds pretty silly) "The Fr. Anthony Summer Challenge". And, "The Fr. Anthony Summer Challenge" was pretty simple. Every week I would give the students a challenge. I would text them or email them and the challenges were spiritual and they were also relational.

So, for instance, I would invite them one week to call up a friend and pray with them on the phone. Or another week to call up a friend and share the graces of that week. One of the bigger challenges was to have the students go on pilgrimage. Where would they go? To a shrine? Well, not exactly. They would visit each other and try to go to daily mass.

At the end of the summer, these students were reporting that they had very strong spiritual life and moral life; that it was their spiritual friendships that kept them afloat. Well, we need friends as you know. We need friends to cry with, to laugh with, to support, to pray with, to do all sorts of things with! God wants us to be with our friends and if I can offer three things you might consider to do with your friends it would be this. Got your pen and paper ready?

The first is this: share your graces. Share your graces! The second is: share how you received those graces. And the third: pray with your friends.

Okay, for the first thing, Jesus is with us. Our Lord and Savior is with us! He loves us so much and He has made our lives better and happier. There are a myriad of ways that God comes to us and blesses us and we want to tell that story to other people. Because, after all, graces in our lives were not just for us. They are also to be shared with others. And so, we want to ask that question to ourselves, “How has Jesus Christ made my life better and happier?”.

When I look out into the world what do I see? Do I see Jesus blessing people? When I look into my mind, when I look into my heart, when I look at my body, how has the Lord blessed me? We want to share with our friends how Jesus Christ has made our lives better and happier.

The second thing is this: we want to share how the Lord gave us these graces. How we got from point A to point B. I really think that this time in the Church is a time for showing people how we got certain graces. You know, I think that there’s this part of us that thinks that we have to be theologians or super-saints in order to have any kind of thing to say about the spiritual life. But it’s not true!

One of my friends told me this, he said, “You don’t have to be a master mechanic to teach a friend how to change the brakes on their car”. I thought to myself, “That makes a lot of sense”. You know, you show your friend how you take apart the break and on the next tire or wheel you do it again. On the third one you have them kinda try doing it. And on the fourth one, they do it on their own. In the spiritual life, we want to do the same thing. How do we get from point A to point B.

And the last thing is this, the third thing, we want to pray with our friends. There is something special that happens when we pray with our friends and if you followed me with a camera during my daily life you would see me praying with my friends on the phone. Praying with people at the grocery store. Praying with people at church. Praying with people wherever I go because that’s what friends do together.

We’re on a wonderful journey of faith. Our journey is to experience the Father’s heart, His mercy, His joy, His promise. Jesus is with us and we want to walk with others as Jesus walks with us. Try these three things: share your grace, share how you received them and pray with your friends.

Before we go, can I give my blessing?

Father, I thank you for all of the people viewing this video. We pray for strong and healthy Christian friendships. Bless your sons and daughters the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. And God will bless you all.