

## NURTURING FRIENDSHIP

by Jean Glaraton

*"Human to human, face to face, voice to voice is vital."* From Bringing to Life Grace Within

I had breakfast this morning with one of my best friends. We meet pretty regularly—both one on one and with a larger circle of friends—and it's time I look forward to and treasure. We met at our church's Moms Group when our 22-year-old daughters were just 18 months. In addition to supporting one another through the typical busy (and joyful and intense) days of family life, we've seen each other through health crises, job losses, extended family challenges, and expanding nests. We became a team when we served as co-leaders of that same Moms Group, and when our third-graders needed facilitators for WordMasters... cue the two of us!

Having young children often places us in situations where we meet other parents. From preschool playdates to volunteering during the elementary years to that all-night senior lock-in, there is space for both the "social butterfly"—one who works the room with apparent comfort and ease—and the "wallflower"—one who prefers a familiar face and quiet conversation. In these settings, children are naturally drawn to each other, and the adults get to do so "by default." Adult relationships can be sparked in so many ways: a connection at work; through a social group; using an online platform; meeting at a church activity; being neighbors. Acquaintances grow into friendships when properly nourished.

So how did our acquaintance bloom into a friendship counted in decades? How did the social butterfly and the social introvert stay friends once the scenarios that brought us together were history? We are intentional. We nurture our relationship with regular face to face time. We talk, voice to voice. We use the written word, sending notes and cards. We exchange small gifts, reminders of our friendship sprinkled throughout our homes. Yes, we've learned to take advantage of email, texting, and a bit of social media, but we also set aside time to be together in person. No virtual hug or character on a screen can replace the warmth and memories of our three-hour breakfasts.

*Think about how you communicate. Do you prefer the written word or voice? Why?*

*How do you nurture your closest friendships? How often do you connect "face to face," "voice to voice"?*

**Loving God, thank you for the gift of true friendship. Remind me often of the value of connection. In this world of virtual reality and communication by device, help me to know the importance of hearing a human voice, of feeling the touch of a friend, of taking time to be together in-person. May I feel Your unconditional love through the love of my friends, and be open to new friendships still to come in my life. With gratitude and hope, I pray in Your name. Amen.**



ENRICHMENT, EMPOWERMENT, COMMUNITY-BUILDING

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