



# Home Rituals

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St. Ignatius Loyola Parish

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## Introducing Rituals into your Home.

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## Friendship

With school beginning again our children are once again immersed in a social world. One of the biggest skills for children to learn is how to develop friendships. We ourselves may remember these childhood friendships and can reflect upon the graces of those years.

It may be hard for us to shift this concept of childhood friendships from the school yard to the bible, yet the concept of friendship shows up frequently in the bible, especially in the gospel of John.

*No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. (Jn 15:15)*

Yet we don't always think of friendship as a key element of spirituality or religion. Oftentimes our God images are more distant and less intimate—God as creator, judge, king, ruler. But many spiritual writers have come to an approach where Jesus, at the very least, may be considered friend.

If we were to list many of the characteristics of friendship, especially what we experienced as a child, we might see these very compatible with our desire for prayer. There's that sense of companionship which is an essential in Jesuit spirituality. There's that habit of telling what's happening in our lives and in our day. There's that aspect of a confidant, sharing the deeper parts of ourselves with trust in the other. There's that simple sense of presence when you are just happy to be in one another's company. There's that desire that this relationship grow and continue. All things we hope for in our prayer lives with Jesus.



If we want to establish this kind of relationship with Jesus in prayer, it means more than just "telling our side", there needs to be more of a mutual learning about one another. And here is where we can shift our ways of telling the gospel stories to our children, so that they can experience that sense of friendship themselves with Jesus.

Telling a story like the feeding of the people is a great example of Jesus' power, of the miracles that he performed. But to tell it from the perspective of Jesus caring for others, understanding their needs, even working with the disciples as a team to feed all the people. Well that begins the idea that much of Jesus mission was about relationship, about making people feel like they belonged. These stories can be about Jesus working with friends, inviting others to be friends, of listening, caring and desiring to simply be with others.

Friendship really is a recurring theme throughout the bible that we overlook. Did you know that Abraham was called a friend of God? (Is 41:8, James 2;23) Or when Moses spoke to God face-to-face, as does a friend. (Ex 33:11) Awareness is just the first step in probing the topic of friendship in the bible and biblical culture. (Search on Biblegateway: <https://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=friend&version=RSVCE>) Take some time to reflect on and pray about friendship—our friendship with one another and the possibility of becoming friends with God. Then consider how you might teach or cultivate this in your children.

## Prayer Images

*Of course there are many different ways to pray and sometimes we kind of miss the opportunity to teach them to our children. Let's face it, we often "outgrow" the simple and the playful and ourselves feel that to pray like children is simply silly. Well, you might consider recovering some of the "silly", at least to teach your children that God really does desire to meet them where they are—as children.*

*Loyola Press lists a "coloring book" that might be helpful. <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/scripture-and-tradition/scripture/gods-wonderful-word-coloring-page/>*

*And while we are on the subject (page), notice the link to the various "Symbols for Jesus". Kids may not be too good at drawing Jesus, but they may be able to draw the Chi-Ro or the fish symbol. It is also a great way to introduce them to church history (why these symbols) or even to some of the art in church. Ask the children if they can find some of these symbols in the stained glass windows. Maybe help them to see and understand other symbols like the dove, a halo, a chalice, various flowers. If nothing else, you are exposing them to some great colors and designs, adding to their imagination.*



### When Images and Understanding go Awry!

For those who really listen to children, you know that their understanding of images and concepts sometimes gets distorted. A simple image of God as Creator might just be interpreted as a God who is too big, too distant to hear the prayers of a little child. Even the image of God as parent, as Father (Prodigal Son story) or Mother (Can a woman forget the child at her breast) can sometimes be misconstrued if there has been conflict between the parent and child. In other words, these images may need some care and re-imagining to help the children develop a more helpful understanding.

In her article, "**Can I Really Tell God What I Feel?**", Rebecca Ruiz tells of encountering a friend who said

"I am so sad and angry and disappointed that I just can't pray! I feel too much negativity right now. I've got to get myself together before I can pray again."

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/can-i-really-tell-god-how-i-feel/>

One can only imagine this person's understanding of God when she feels she has to be in a "perfect" state in order to pray. (Notice that this person who feels they cannot talk to God is able to talk with her friend.) Yet this is often times what happens, not only with adults, but with children. Hence the opportunity to teach children to consider God as Friend, or at the very least, help them to see Jesus this way. In fact, showing children how they often just "hang out" with friends, not having to say anything, can be the way in which we can "hang out" with God, with Jesus or even with a Saint we've come to know and trust.



## Friendship with God

Of course we have the gospels to teach us about Jesus and about God whom he called Father. But still we don't often think of Jesus as a "normal" person. Fr. James Martin, SJ points out that Jesus had friends. Something that we may need to point out to our children just to let them know just how human Jesus was.

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/jesus-had-friends/>

Still, that idea of being friends with Jesus should be something that we can "extrapolate" to the God that Jesus often talked about and talked with. Fr.

William Barry, SJ, author and spiritual director, wrote a book about this **A Friendship Like No Other.**

<https://store.loyolapress.com/a-friendship-like-no-other-william-barry-sj>

In an interview with Ignatian Spirituality, Fr. Barry said about prayer: "I have become convinced that the best analogy for the relationship God wants with us is friendship." Even if you don't read the book, this little interview can give you a context for relating to God a bit differently, not as judge, not as "Santa Claus"—the purveyor of gifts for good boys and girls, and not as creator—someone cosmic and distant. If you find this image genuine and appealing to you, it might be something to pass on and teach to your children as well.



## The Pope Video — Social Friendships

For those who haven't seen it, every month the Pope publishes a new video of his special intention. One month might be on marriage, another on care for the earth, still another on care for the elderly. In July of this year, Pope Francis asked us to pray for Social Friendships, that is, friendship that extends beyond our usual group of friends. He asks us to seek to encounter especially the poor and the marginalized, to find ways of Dialogue and Friendship to heal the world. You can see this video at:

<https://thepopevideo.org/july-social-friendship/>



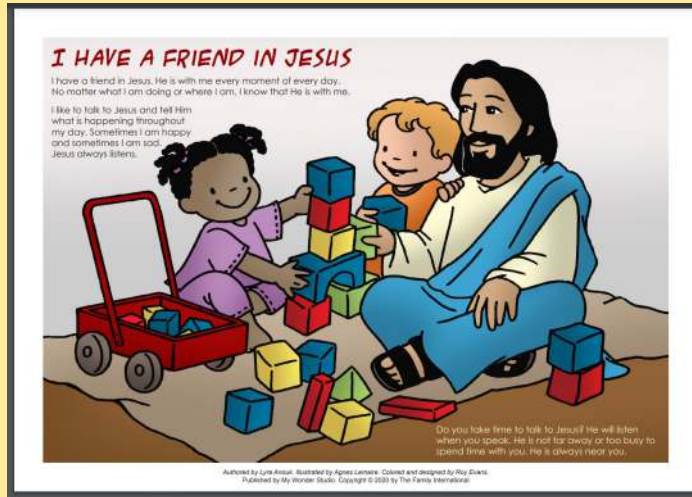
Note that all the videos of the Pope are in Italian with subtitles in English. What makes them special is that their visuals always include so many different people from around the world. Which means, the Pope is teaching us how to "encounter" different people, to develop social friendships in the videos themselves.

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**Finding God in All Things**



Download picture at: [https://mywonderstudio.com/documents/2279/605\\_I\\_Have\\_a\\_Friend\\_in\\_Jesus.pdf](https://mywonderstudio.com/documents/2279/605_I_Have_a_Friend_in_Jesus.pdf)

## Fratelli Tutti – Social Friendship

Pope Francis, although he started this letter to the world before the pandemic most of it was written during the crisis. So while Pope Francis speaks of the dark clouds of the world today, he is buoyed by the gospel story of the Good Samaritan, who, despite the differences of culture and religion, still dares to reach across boundaries to help another in need. Such acts of kindness, whether historical or part of our own experience, are the shining light that express the meaning and mission of the gospel. The good news is not about politics or the economy or even scientific advances, it is about relationship, compassion and even



mercy. As Pope Francis writes, we must build a culture of inclusion where we reach beyond the walls created by our society or by our fears to treat all with dignity, to see all as neighbor. Francis speaks of the need for both Dialogue and Friendship as the solution, as the embodiment of the gospel.

From the sixth chapter, “Dialogue and friendship in society”, further emerges the concept of life as the “art of encounter” with everyone, even with the world’s peripheries and with original peoples, because “each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable”

One of the challenges of teaching friendship to our children, teaching them that God is friend, is that such friendship must reach beyond the boundaries of our own social group, to encounter those who are different from ourselves, encounter them without fear but with a great desire to learn from them. And while it may be difficult in the face of the Dark Clouds to teach our



children such trust and outreach, Pope Francis once again asks us to consider the virtue of kindness as a remedy for the evil that we seek to avoid.

Then, of particular note, is the Pope’s reference to the miracle of “kindness”, an attitude to be recovered because it is a star “shining in the midst of darkness” and “frees us from the cruelty ... the anxiety ... the frantic flurry of activity” that prevail in the contemporary era. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-10/fratelli-tutti-pope-fraternity-social-friendship-short-summary.html>

Learning to make friends, learning to be a friend, is such an important part of our faith life.