



First Week of Lent- 2/24- Becky Eldridge and Marina McCoy

“Growing with God” Meditation 1: Friendship with God

by Becky Eldredge

I maintain that God—out of the abundance of divine relational life, not any need for us—desires humans into existence for the sake of friendship. This thesis may sound strange because it runs counter to much teaching about God. To be honest, I questioned it myself when I first began to think it through. But over the years, as my own relationship with God has deepened and I have listened to people talk about how God relates to them, I have become convinced that the best analogy for the relationship God wants with us is friendship.

As I begin my Lenten journey, I pray to understand what it means for my life that God wants to be friends with me. —William A. Barry, SJ, in *Lenten Meditations: Growing in Friendship with God*

The idea that God wants to be friends with me seems absurd! Why in the world would God, the Creator of the universe, the Giver of all things, want to be in relationship with me? What can I possibly offer God in the realm of friendship?

There are many types of friendships in my life:

- the friends who can sit with me and hold everything going on in my life.
- the friends who can sit in silence with me as we savor our time together.
- the ones who laugh loudly with me and celebrate the abundance of life.
- the ones who are present during the tough times
- the ones that are part of my day-to-day life and support me in parenting my children.
- My friends who are just always there for me!

All these friends offer a piece of themselves to me, and by their doing so I experience what it’s like to be loved by another. I, too, offer various types of friendships to men and women in my life. In being there as a friend, I am helping them experience what it’s like to be loved by another.

God offers a relationship that encompasses all of these different types of friendships. In a sense, God is the totality of all my human friends in one. God sits with me in silence, rejoices with me, laughs with me, celebrates with me, supports me in tough times, and walks with me in my day-to-day life. All of these ways that God is present deepen my understanding of God’s love for me.

What can I offer to God, though? I offer my presence to God. I offer my response to the totality of God’s love. I offer my love to God as I laugh, celebrate, cry, and share the depths of my heart with God. I offer my gifts and talents to God. In this mutual giving to each other and receiving from each other, we develop a deep friendship with each other.

“Growing with God” Meditation 1: The Lie at the Heart of Human Sinfulness

by Marina Berzins McCoy

The Lie at the Heart of Human Sinfulness ...

The lie at the heart of human sinfulness is that we can gain control of our existence by some action of our own and that God does not want us to have this power. God creating human beings in God’s own likeness is described in the first creation account in Genesis. But instead of accepting the friendship with God that was offered, human beings chose to enter into rivalry with God. The consequences of that disastrous choice plague our world still.

Do I harbor any distrust of God over control and power in my life? Can I pray the New Testament prayer “I believe; help my unbelief”?

—William A. Barry, SJ, in *Lenten Meditations: Growing in Friendship with God*

Friendship with Jesus has been central to my faith since my conversion. Perhaps because I was not raised Catholic, I have not had some of the same struggles with the idea of Jesus’ humanity described by those raised with more emphasis on God’s kingship. Intimacy with God has always been central to me.

However, I have a different kind of struggle, which is to *surrender control to God* in those areas of my life that are out of my control. In my life as a mom, teacher, wife, administrator, and household manager, I am good at organization and balance. However, I find myself challenged when faced with events outside of my control. For example, in the aftermath of a broken friendship where my friend refused to re-engage, I found myself acting in ways that were demanding and impatient on the path of seeking reconciliation. Sometimes we must accept loss, however difficult. Others’ responses are never in our own control.

Central to friendship with God, as with any friendship, is mutual trust. As I said recently to a companion, “I trust in God; it’s other people that can be hard to trust!” Yet trusting in God is also a matter of trusting that despite my own and others’ human limits and sin, I am gently being invited to cooperate with the God who wants to “make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). I’m learning that I have not only to offer God my own creativity and responsibility, but to make that offer freely, without trying to control God or anyone else. Not easy!

How do we do it? The adage says, “Let go and let God.” We can offer ourselves freely to God and to others and then let go of the outcomes. For example, in service work, I cannot know whether the person whom I am serving will benefit. But I can trust that God will somehow weave my actions into a larger, meaningful pattern. Slowly I am discovering that Jesus’ story and mine are intertwined, like threads in those old friendship bracelets that we used to weave back in college. The threads of both joy and suffering are like bright threads that contribute to the pattern of our stories with God.