



Week 2: Holy Friendships PRACTICE

Day 1 (Sunday) - Gratitude

Think about a Holy Friendship in your life. It could be a fellow believer who helped you through a difficult time, an elder, Sunday School teacher, or other leader who helped point you toward a life of faith, or anyone else who has encouraged you in the past.

- **Reflect:** What was it about this person that made their Holy Friendship important?
- **Pray:** Give thanks to God for their example and their giving of themselves to you and to others.
- **Act:** How can I extend Holy Friendship to someone else like this person did to me? Is there someone I can think of whom I can befriend in the same way?

Day 2 (Monday) - Compassion

Throughout scripture, God is on the side of “the least of these,” from the Law requiring care and hospitality for the stranger, alien, orphan, and widow, to the prophets condemning the rich for exploiting the poor, to Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan, which teaches that our neighbor is anyone in need, to the parable of the sheep and the goats, in which Jesus says any time we show compassion to the “least of these,” we show that compassion to Jesus himself.

- **Reflect:** Identify those people and groups to whom you need to show friendship and compassion. How can you help alleviate the suffering of others? How can you stand up for the vulnerable?
- **Pray:** Ask God to show you opportunities to be a good friend, a good neighbor, to anyone who needs your help, especially those who are helpless, victimized, on the margins of society.
- **Act:** What concrete steps can you take to befriend others, especially, as Jesus did, those whom the world denies or considers “less than”?

Day 3 (Tuesday) - A Community of Faith

Last week we talked about being a Worshiping Community. This week, with our focus on Holy Friendships, we focus on being a Community of Faith: one where Holy Friendships are encouraged and where they can flourish. Read Sunday’s Epistle Lesson once more (Colossians 3:12-17).

- **Reflect:** How is this scripture calling us to become a community of faith?
- **Pray:** Ask God to help the Word dwell in you richly.
- **Act:** Commit yourself to studying the scriptures and to prioritizing gathered worship, especially the singing of Psalms and Hymns as this scripture says, as a means of allowing God’s Word to take deeper root in your life.

Day 4 (Wednesday) - Removing the Barriers

In Sunday's Gospel, a group of friends removed any and all barriers so that their friend in need could have access to Jesus. Read Sunday's Gospel again (Luke 5:17-25).

- **Reflect:** What barriers might there be that prevent you from bringing others to Jesus?
- **Pray:** Ask God to open and soften your heart to the needs of those around you, and to remove any barriers, so that all may feel safe with you.
- **Act:** Invite a friend, relative, neighbor, or co-worker to worship or to Bible Study.

Day 5 (Thursday) - Cultivating Holy Friendships

Read Acts 2:42. The early Christians devoted themselves to four things: 1) Apostolic teaching, 2) Fellowship, 3) The Eucharist ("the breaking of the bread"), and 4) Liturgical Prayer, that is, praying together in the context of a service of gathered worship ("the prayers"). That second one, "fellowship," refers to our common life together: to cultivating Holy Friendships so that we encourage one another to grow in our faith.

- **Reflect:** What do you think are the distinguishing marks of a "holy friendship" as opposed to other friendships?
- **Pray:** Ask God to deepen our sense of common life as a community of faith, to give us more of a sense of Holy Friendships.
- **Act:** What concrete steps can you take this week to deepen your experience of common life in the faith community?

Day 6 (Friday) - Friendships in Scripture

Choose a story of friendship in the Bible, such as: Naomi and Ruth, David and Jonathan, Elijah and Elisha, or Paul and Barnabas.

- **Reflect:** What can you learn from the story you chose about Holy Friendship?
- **Pray:** Ask God to give you a Holy Friendship, and to prepare you to be a "holy friend" to someone else.
- **Act:** Share with someone what you have learned this week about the importance of Holy Friendships.

Day 7 (Saturday) - Taking Risks

Being a friend means taking the risk to be vulnerable. As a congregation, cultivating Holy Friendships also means taking risks as a faith community. "Two people excited about the same thing are the beginning of almost everything new, creative, and risky in our world." Can you give an example of this in your own life or in today's culture? How does this statement relate to our role as a church? Are we taking risks? Are we creative? When have you seen a community stop taking risks? What happens? What happens when a community takes risks? How are you going to help the community sense a shared vision of creativity and risk-taking in order to be faithful followers of Jesus?