



# Sunflower Seeds

Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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## Friendship: The Eighth Sacrament

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on MAY 21, 2012

Friendship has been by far one of the greatest blessings in my life. I agree with the spiritual writer, Alice Camille, who says that friendship should be named the eighth sacrament.

Why is friendship so important for our spiritual life? First of all, friends support and encourage us. As Camille says, "If you've got a friend, you've got a port in every storm." When I was ill a few years back, my friends came to my aid. They called me, wrote notes, sent emails, prayed for me, drove me to the doctor, and offered to come over and give me a back rub or just sit with me.

But good friends do more than encourage us. They challenge us. A good friend can be honest with us if they see us heading in the wrong direction. Sometimes they challenge us with words. But most often friends challenge us simply by the witness of their own good example. When I see my friends dealing with the stresses and problems of everyday life, I am inspired to face my own challenges with greater courage and equanimity.

Friends also broaden our perspective. Although we probably share some of the same interests with our friends, most friends are different enough from us to make our relationship interesting. My friends, for example, have taken me to movies I might not have chosen to see, suggested books I might never have picked up, and taught me about things I knew little about—like the evils of human trafficking, the joys and challenges of parenting, the raising of sheep, and how to make plum dumplings.

Friends also make it easier to believe that we are loved by God. Good friends know us very well. They know our strengths and our weaknesses—and yet they still love us. Somehow they can overlook our failings and focus on our gifts. Their friendship

## About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

Sister of Notre Dame,  
teacher, student, author,  
speaker, listener, friend,  
poet, farm girl.



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## About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I'll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality—the everyday kind of spirituality that



includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.

Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we're all in this life—this spiritual life—together!

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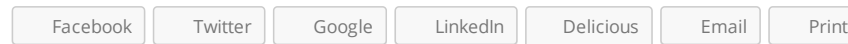
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proclaims, "I like being with you!" What greater compliment can we receive? I like to think that God loves me chiefly *through* my friends. Their attention, hugs, encouragement, and laughter are all ways God is saying, "I get a kick out of you!"

Who are some of your good friends? Why?

How important has friendship been in your life?

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**Shauna Bankemper** May 21, 2012 at 5:47 am



I am proud to call you friend! Love ya!

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** May 21, 2012 at 3:47 pm



Ditto, Shauna! Melannie

REPLY

**Ellen Svette Huntsman** May 21, 2012 at 9:25 am



I am so blessed by my friends. To all those who have supported me through all my trials, I say thank you.

God is so good & brings those "Angels" to us when we are most in need.

Blessings to all my friends.

REPLY

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**Melannie Svoboda SND** May 21, 2012 at 3:46 pm

Thank you for writing, Ellen! I agree with you: "angels" come in many forms! Melannie



REPLY

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**Annete Adams, SND** May 21, 2012 at 9:27 am

Even though we are thousands of miles away and totally different countries, I treasure your friendship. Thanks for all your inspirational writings. I share them with our novices and postulants here in Tanzania



REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** May 21, 2012 at 3:43 pm

And I treasure your friendship too, Annete! The internet and prayers bring us close together despite the geographical separation! Thank you! Melannie



REPLY

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**Betty Nagel** May 21, 2012 at 1:37 pm

I'm going to print this out and write a note to go with it to give to some special friends. I have been blessed with so many good friends. Thanks, Melannie, for your wise insight into the gift of friendship. Through your many writings ~ all of which I have bought and read ~ I feel like we are friends, too, and I have such fond memories of our days in the novitiate together!



REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** May 21, 2012 at 3:42 pm

Thanks, Betty, for the nice idea~sending this reflection to some of your friends. You're very thoughtful! Melannie



REPLY

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**Julie Teder** May 21, 2012 at 3:31 pm



Hi Melannie,

I read your message in the Sunflower Seeds and always find something good to carry with me. It is almost like a visit with you and we treasure those. They are always too far in between but I feel the presence of your friendship in every Sunflower Seeds message. Thanks.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** May 21, 2012 at 3:41 pm



Dear Julie, Thank you for writing—all the way from lovely North Carolina! I felt the presence of your friendship as I read your words. God bless you!  
Melannie

REPLY

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**Lalita, SND** May 22, 2012 at 11:25 am



Dear Melanie,  
Though we have not been communicating in writing , I always count you as a treasured friend! The warmth and childlike genuineness of your smile remains with me all these years from those long gone college and juniorate fun days! Of course I remember too helping to put on my saree when you visited us in Patna some years back! Your articles and books are a real treat too! God Bless!  
With Lots of Love,  
Lalita,SND.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** May 23, 2012 at 9:09 am



Dear Lalita, How wonderful to hear from you again! Yes, I will always treasure our friendship too! (For my readers: Sister Lalita came from India to study in the US for a few years when we were both very young nuns—in the 1960's. I had the privilege of meeting her again in 1999 when I went to India for the 50th anniversary celebration of the founding of that mission. That's when I wore her sari for a day! I'll try to find the picture I have somewhere.)

REPLY

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**Sr.M.Francismarie** May 24, 2012 at 8:23 am

Loved reading your new book, When the Blue Heron Flies. As always you show such a sensitive appreciation of nature and the world around you. Thanks for sharing those things that bring one closer to our creator God.



REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** May 24, 2012 at 12:56 pm

And thank you, Francismarie, for your encouragement and support!  
Melannie



REPLY

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