

# SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

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One of my favorite hobbies is reading books or magazines, as well as, when visiting bookstores and libraries, searching among different titles and authors. In one of these searches, I once read something by an author who wrote, “Sometimes we ask the Divine for a miracle and It sends us a friend.” This topic of friends is really nothing new – Greek philosophers were already discussing it more than 2,400 years ago. Aristotle himself declared, “Without friends no one would want to live.” He also added that friendship helps younger ones not to make mistakes while alleviating the vulnerability of older ones.

If we go back a little further in human history, to our roots, to Pharaoh Akhnaton, we discover that in those times there was no specific term for a friend: the term “brother” was used instead. The depictions of Akhnaton with his family would be a good example of this. The pharaoh embraces one of his daughters and “gives her the breath, shares with her his air.” He is hereby declaring that she is very important to him; nowadays, one way to demonstrate this relationship is through friendship, which for some ancient cultures was identified with brotherhood. In brotherhood there is reunion, touching, shaking hands. We see very ancient images where those who share brotherhood sit at the same table to partake food and stories. This is something we have seen in many ancient cultures.

Friendship, later called fraternity from a philosophical point of view, is a universal and transversal value, implying for all people the need to consider themselves as brothers and sisters. In this way, the value of fraternity leads us to be supportive, respectful, and empathetic with each other. We may notice that, already in the eighteenth century, fraternity was linked to the ideals promoted by the 1789 French Revolution, that is, the quest for liberty, equality, and fraternity.

A notable quote is from Raymond Andrea, former Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in England, in his book *The Technique of the Master*, in which he says: “In fact, the more we advance in our occult work,

the more it appears necessary and natural to evaluate the persons we meet according to this inner point of view, the better we develop a completely new scale of values and thus move away from the judgment of being objective. Then we seek the certain intuition of the divine guide, whose voice is

so clear and insistent that we recognize and trust it. This is how we learn to detect our true companions on the Path.”

There are different companions on the path. There are those with whom we shared a common history for many years, as well as those who accompany us in the search for well-being. We also have friends who are present in moments of fun and joy and those companions in the pursuit of excellence and professional or economic well-being. Additionally, no less



*Akhnaton and one of his daughters.*

important are those who accompany us on the spiritual path, whom I prefer to call “spiritual friends”; I am referring here to my fratres and sorores.

The year 1972 was one very important year in my life. On the first of February of that year I entered the portals of the Order. I still have in my Sanctum a certificate received from San Jose, California, that testifies this. At the end of the previous year, at the age of eighteen, I had obtained my bachelor’s degree in business and moved to my country’s capital city to continue my higher studies in accounting, and then, something interesting occurred to me.

For the first time I had moved away from my childhood friends, my school friends; I was leaving behind my whole life of adventures and memories, although it was only an eighteen-year-long story, but I already missed it. Today I still have some of these friends whom I call my “joint history” friends, my life friends.

At the same time when I left behind many of those joint history friends, thanks to my Rosicrucian affiliation, I met, that same year, a group of friends whom I call my “spiritual friends.”

I quickly learned that the spiritual path requires spiritual friends. We always need allies, although no one can directly change another, but they can do a lot to support them. For instance, when you lose interest in participating in group activities, you can still join in just for the sake of feeling supported or not to disappoint them. Belonging to a community of like-minded people is a great help in difficult times.

This new group of friends I met was totally different from those I had met in the past. It was a group of seekers of excellence and wisdom through knowledge – this filled me with satisfaction. It is a somewhat difficult group to belong to, because it requires equal attention to the way you



*The interior of the Grand Temple  
in San Jose, California.*

behave with others, and the way others behave with you. It was with this group that I discovered the true concept of humility. Of all the negative emotions we may see in another person, I think the one that bothers people the most is arrogance, which is the opposite of humility. We tend to get more upset with an arrogant person than with a violent person. For this reason, in our society, humility is defined as a noble and spiritual state, a state of equanimity that recognizes equality in all relationships. In humility, everyone is given the same value and the same importance, so we all hold the same importance and the same value when we relate to each other.

Human behavior in relation to humility clearly shows the level of consciousness of the individual – and mine was not very high to say the least, thus I feel indebted to my fratres and sorores on the Path. This relationship of friendship is somewhat demanding, due to the difficulty we have in feeling equality when we value ourselves and others. This group of friends required an investment of time and space in order to achieve its continuity, something that was not easy for me at nineteen, with a new profession, a new city to discover, and a university career degree to achieve. However, during the seven years that I spent with this first spiritual group, I never stopped caring for it and nourishing



it. It was through this group of fratres and sorores of the Lodge that I came to be acquainted with a second group of spiritual friends in my life.

We are now in 1979, which marks another important event on my path. That year I ceased to be an investigator of financial banking crimes, a job to which I had dedicated the previous seven years. I also left my colleagues with whom I had already established an emotional connection. Just a few months earlier, in December 1978, I got married – since then forty-five years have elapsed in my union: thank you, Lala! I had a new job, as deputy financial director for the national telephone company. Every time I went into my office and saw under my name the title “Deputy Controller,” I felt an emptiness in my heart: a void, that of my historical friends, the ones I mentioned earlier as being the first group of friends. I also felt the absence of my colleagues that I was used to seeing, and realized that these relationships took a few years to build. It was a good position, but very solitary, and besides that the political situation of my country was deteriorating, thus a change of environment was inevitable. It was in that year, just four days after my first wedding anniversary, that my wife and I decided to leave everything behind and emigrate to another country, in search of new opportunities.

Thus, before the end of 1979, Lala resigned from her position as financial administrator of a prestigious airline company, and I resigned as deputy financial director of my country’s national telephone company. Without much pondering, we emigrated to a strange country, with a strange language and a strange culture for us. I remember those first Christmas family dinners, how both Lala and I were in tears with every bite, eating something that we didn’t know what it was, missing the food of our small town, the typical food of the end-of-the-year festivities to which we were so accustomed. I missed the friends of life.

Here in this new environment, however, I met my third group of friends. Family friends that I preferred to call emotional friends. Next to my father, mother, and siblings, the first one that comes to my memory is my father-in-law; it was love at first sight. My father-in-law and I have been great friends. He taught me to understand American football, one of his passions. We spent entire Sundays in reclining armchairs watching games.

He also taught me Italian cuisine; he was an excellent cook. My father-in-law graduated from the military academy in Italy with honors, as a lieutenant colonel in the armed forces. My future mother-in-law was not only my elementary school teacher, but lived at home with us almost



until the day of her transition. I remember her always worrying about my diet when I was a child and making sure I always wore clean clothes. In addition to my siblings and other relatives, a new group of friends was born for me, the “family friends.” The interesting thing about this group was that their main objective was to have a good time, and the truth is that, at the time, they were a very fun group; so today, I miss them very much. I must speak in past tense because most of them have already gone through transition. There are still a few of them and when we get together we have a wonderful time, always spending unforgettable moments.

In addition to the other groups of friends, there is also the group of “fun friends.” This is a very interesting group because this group gathers exclusive members of all the previous groups. The difference is that their main objective is to have a good time, to have healthy fun. It is easily said, but in practice it is not so easy to find friends who can have a good time within the framework of respect for the ethical and moral values of the rest of the group. This is a very important group for my mental health. This is the group of travel, exotic restaurants, movies, theater, weekend barbecues, etc. It is a very fun and tolerant group at the same time. There is never a problem deciding where we go, what we eat or drink. We have been part of this group for more than forty



uninterrupted years of shared celebrations and joys.

However, the topic that is central to this presentation is that of “spiritual friends.” As I mentioned earlier, 1979 was a very important year for me and this includes my spiritual friends. Upon moving to this new city at the end of 1979, I visited a local affiliated body in search of spiritual friends. I knew beforehand that in this group of friends, nationality, language, sex, gender, race, religion, politics would not be important; there is a common goal, a quest, that turns it into a fraternity.

It was then that something happened, that changed my life forever. As I think back today, what would become of us without external teachers? In 1979, when I arrived at an affiliated body for the first time, I saw a group of members who were collecting signatures to expel the then-Master in office. One of them approached me asking for my support. I declined, so my first visit in that affiliated body was not harmonious; in fact, I was rejected by the group.

That night I withdrew in my Sanctum, and after extensive reflection, I decided not to participate in any group activity of the Order for a period of twenty years. I did so and twenty years later I went to that affiliated body again, which was no longer located in the same place. To my surprise, they were again collecting signatures to revoke the then-Master in office. But this time something wonderful happened: I was not at all bothered by the intentions of this small group; I felt that something had changed and it was not exactly a change in the attitude of the spiritual friends group. It was I who had reached a different state of consciousness, if I compared myself to how I was twenty years before.

Hundreds of years of study and research have repeatedly shown that the people who do best in life and achieve the





greatest happiness are those who rely on relationships with their family, life friends, and their community, most especially with spiritual friends, some of whom we call *fratres* and *sorores* and others brothers and sisters.

We all seek happiness, we all want to be happy and for many, this becomes a philosophy of life, which implies among other things to improve the way of thinking, to know how to distinguish those things that benefit us or not. This also includes knowing what other people require from us in order to be happy, to feel good. Knowing how to provide others with their needs is a sign of wisdom and spiritual growth.

The norms of social behavior are different from the norms of behavior in the world of markets, whether labor or economic. In the labor market, when we provide a service, we expect to be paid an equivalent amount, since this is the law. Social norms do not work this way, since they do not carry a compensation for goods or services. In the spiritual realm especially, compensation may come in the form of a thank you, a friendship, or

perhaps an apprenticeship, or simply the expectation of receiving another favor in return in the future. All of these rewards are more powerful than money.

The problem arises when we confuse market norms with social norms: this happens because social norms are more powerful than market norms. For example, compensating someone with money reduces their motivation, since the relationship is no longer voluntary, it becomes commercial. Worst of all, when this happens it is almost impossible to go back, because, after the cessation of the service relationship, we do not expect to be paid for attending a birthday party or be refunded for a Christmas gift. For this reason, we must not be self-taught on the Rosicrucian path, for spiritual conduct has its own conditions. We must be instructed to the truth through well organized teachings, through a trained Master, through Initiation, and not least, through spiritual friends.

*Fratres* and *sorores*, thank you very much for being my spiritual friends.