

ST. JULIE BILLIART - NOVENA DAY 3 JULIE, WOMAN OF FRIENDSHIP

Take a moment to center yourself and go into the sacred space deep within
"Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here."



JULIE'S VOICE ON FRIENDSHIP

"It is true that we understand one another from a distance as well as when we are close.
My heart also shares with yours a sense that our friendship is firmly rooted in God."

PRAYER

Slowly pray the psalm and let it take you into that quiet place
where you can rest in God's presence, remembering the great company of friends and acquaintance
that have become part of you and are present with you in prayer

No-one, my God, knows me as you know me.
You know my every thought, word and deed,
everything that motivates me, every reaction I have,
my every feeling and sensation.
And this you know from before I was born.
I have no secrets from you.
You know me better than my closest friend
and love me with unchanging love.
Wherever I go, you are with me, loving me.
By day and night you care about me,
seeking only my good.
Help me Lord to love you in return.
Let me always be guided by your word.
Thank you for the gift of life
and for the greatest gift of all,
your abounding, unchanging love.

Adapted from Psalm 138

JULIE'S STORY

Julie obviously had a gift for making friends even when she was confined to bed and immobile. As a young girl she had attracted the children of Cuvilly to gather round her to hear her speak of the things of God. When she suffered the shock that left her paralysed for over twenty years friends would come to sit with her and listen to her in the intervals when she was able to talk. Even at these difficult times Julie felt the joy of God's goodness and she radiated that joy to others. It was not for nothing that she was called the smiling saint.

One friendship above all that fashioned the future of the Sisters of Notre Dame was her friendship with Françoise Blin de Bourdon. While Julie was the daughter of a provincial draper, Françoise was the daughter of a viscount, a member of the aristocracy who desired to commit her life to God as a Carmelite and who only escaped the guillotine as a result of Robespierre's death a day before she was due to die. Françoise had been introduced to Julie in Amiens by a mutual friend, Madame Baudoin. She was appalled by this invalid who could not move, could scarcely speak, and who needed to be washed, clothed and fed by her niece. It was only after repeated visits when Julie had made some recovery and was able to communicate that Françoise came to recognize her great spiritual strength. Theirs was to become a deep and loving friendship, sustained through letter writing when they were apart. They encouraged and supported one another in the trials and tribulations that setting up a religious community entailed. It is this deep friendship in the Lord that is the foundation of the Sisters of Notre Dame

REFLECTION

Friendship is a great gift, a spiritual and sacred encounter. It creates a bond which is eternal so that we are never alone. It extends beyond borders and barriers. Friends become part of us, are connected to us even when we are apart. Without friendship our lives would be greatly impoverished and lonely.

Reflect on the friendships you have experienced in your life. How have these friendships supported you, sustained you, challenged you? In what ways have they been an expression of God's goodness for you? Give thanks for the great gift of friendship in your life.

How have your coworkers here at NDHCC supported you and helped you during this difficult time? How have you contributed to supporting others on campus? Who do you turn to in times of need? How does the friendship between Julie and Françoise inspire you and give you strength and hope?



REVIEW OF SESSION

What has touched you about this time of prayer?