

Hints for prayer

Psalm 119

Psalm 119 is a continuous prayer of praise, a request for guidance, and a testimony, portraying the believer as a pilgrim who seeks light and strength in the divine law in order not to fall into deception, desiring a life of integrity and communion with the Lord.



Blessed those whose way is blameless,
who walk by the law of the LORD.

Blessed those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with all their heart.

They do no wrong;
they walk in his ways.

You have given them the command
to observe your precepts with care.

May my ways be firm
in the observance of your statutes!

Then I will not be ashamed
to ponder all your commandments.

I will praise you with sincere heart
as I study your righteous judgments.

I will observe your statutes;
do not leave me all alone.

Prayer

O God, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit have filled the hearts of your faithful with gifts of charity, grant health of mind and body to your servants, for whom we beseech your mercy, that they may love you with all their strength and, with all their love, do what is pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
(Collect, *Mas for relatives and friends*)

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The Symphony of Friendship

with Felice de Maria



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Allow me to introduce myself: I am Felice de Maria.

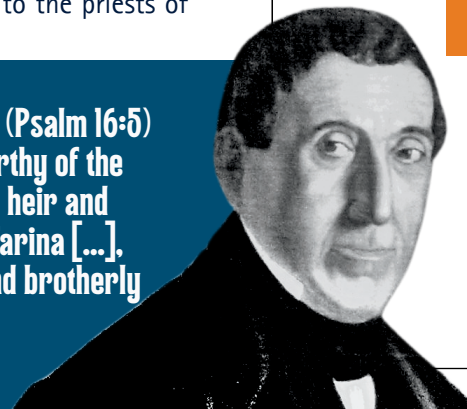
Vicenza, July 4, 1779 – Treviso, January 13, 1857

With just seven notes, a handful of sharps and flats, and a few rests, you can make all the music in the world.

Even the good Lord, with just a handful of friends, can express the imagination of His infinite Charity. I am Felice, and I grew up among molds, ropes, fire, and hammers in my family workshop—the “de Maria” family—expert bell founders whose bells still ring today in many Italian churches, following the craft passed down through generations. At the age of twenty-six, I interrupted this tradition because I realized that the most beautiful music of my life was not that of molten bronze, but that of charity. I devoted myself to many charitable works, but among them, the one I loved and supported the most was the School of Charity. I accompanied it through all its transformations, from the very beginning with Father Angelico and Valentino Piccoli, and later also with Don Giovanni Antonio, to the point of being considered, together with him, the founder and director of the religious Institute of the Sisters Teachers of Saint Dorothy, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts. In this school, I found my second home. I looked for benefactors and spent entire days with the girls, until the evening, when I would pause to meditate in the church near the altar. And that art of bell founding, which I had learned from my father as a child, together with physics, mathematics, and music, proved to be invaluable tools in becoming a good teacher for those girls I loved so dearly. I taught them singing and music, tried to inspire serenity and confidence during their lessons, and took great joy in making them happy by taking them on carriage trips to Saint Anthony of Padua and the sanctuary of Monte Berico. I can truly say that God played for me the music of Charity, accompanied by the friendship of Don Giovanni Antonio. With him, I could share everything; we were like brothers, united by faith and by the dream we saw realized in the faces of the girls. With him, I had the honor of writing and transcribing the memories of the birth of “our” Institute! He often reminded me when he saw me neglecting food or clothing, “overdoing it” in saving for the poor... but for me, it was a grace to give what I had and to embrace the poverty that the Lord and so many saints have embraced! In fact, I wished that all my lands (and there were many, as I had become the sole heir of my family) be given to the Institute and to the priests of several villages, to help their poor.

“The Lord is my portion and my cup: my life is in your hands.” (Psalm 16:5)
I commend my soul to God the Lord so that it may be made worthy of the glory of Heaven. I leave, bequeath, and appoint as the absolute heir and owner of all my possessions. [...] my dearest friend, Antonio Farina [...], with whom I have lived for many years in perfect harmony and brotherly friendship.

(Testament of Felice De Maria, December 28, 1844)



Friendships that helped us grow yesterday... ...and today!

Our relationships, if healthy and authentic, open us to others who expand and enrich us. Nowadays, our noblest social instincts can easily be thwarted by self-centred chats that give the impression of being deep relationships. On the contrary, authentic and mature love and true friendship can only take root in hearts open to growth through relationships with others.

Pope Francis, Fratelli tutti, 89

**Like Felice de Maria, let us also
nurture our friendships
...and make charity resound!**

Some questions to reflect on



- How can I be more present in my friendships?
- I think about the people close to me and ask myself: Is there something they need? How can I be there for them?

A practical step for today



- I will send a message to a friend to let them know I'm thinking of them.
- I will listen to a song that warms my heart and opens me to the beauty around me.

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