

EMM Reflection: Friendship and Mission



This workshop has been created to help schools celebrate the Extraordinary Month of Mission (Oct'19). It focuses on one of four EMM aims: to encourage a deeper relationship with Jesus through prayer.

Today we're going to spend a few minutes thinking about the importance of friendship. Particularly friendships that are there in good times and bad.

Someone who's spoken publicly about this kind of friendship is Bear Grylls.

How many of you have heard of Bear Grylls? Who can tell me what he is he famous for?

Answer: Adventurer and survivalist.

Recently Bear Grylls has spoken about a very close friend of his. Someone who's been there for him during his toughest challenges, providing constant guidance and encouragement. Does anyone know who this friend is?

Answer: It's Jesus.

Bear Grylls has scaled mountains, sailed oceans, trekked deserts, but has said that speaking out about his friendship with Jesus has been one of the most difficult challenges he's faced.

For a long time Bear was worried that he'd be mocked for his faith. But after reflecting on how his faith has helped him grow in wisdom and courage, he's no longer ashamed to say that his friendship with Jesus has become one of the most important in his life.

It can sound strange when we hear Jesus described as a friend. But if all we ever do is associate Christianity with church buildings, services and rules, we can easily lose sight of the fact that Christianity is first and foremost based *on a friendship* with someone who lived, died, and rose for us.

The word *friend* originally comes from an ancient word that means both *love* and *free*.

This reminds us that good friends make us feel loved, valued, and accepted. They bring out the best in us. With them we don't need to pretend, we are free to be the person God created us to be.

Pope Francis, has spoken often about the importance of such friends. He says that 'faithful friends, who stand at our side in times of difficulty, are a reflection of the Lord's love.'

- Spend a few seconds thinking of your faithful friends. How do they reflect God's love for you? **Pause.**
- In your heart, thank God for your faithful friends and ask God to help you be such a friend to others.

- Now that you've had a little time to think about faithful friends, you should be able to describe what one is.
- What are faithful friends like, what do they do?

Possible responses: Listen. Share. Forgive. Accept. Spend time with you. Someone you can laugh with. They are honest, patient, kind, supportive, loyal.

- What difference do faithful friends make in our lives?

Friendship is so important for our wellbeing and happiness that Jesus calls himself a friend *of ours*. He wants to be there *for us*. In John's Gospel he says:

'I do not call you servants any longer, but I call you friends.' Jn 15:15

- Do you consider Jesus your friend? If you were to deepen this friendship with Jesus, what's the best way to do so?

Possible responses: Through prayer. Reading the Bible. Going to Mass.

One central way to deepen this friendship is by spending time in prayer. Bear Grylls began his faith journey aged 16, with a very simple prayer for help following the loss of a family member. Now he prays every day. Or rather, as he's described it, he has a daily conversation with Jesus. This is what prayer is - asking for help when life is tough, thanking him for the good things, listening for God's guidance.

Although Bear sees prayer as important, he's admitted that he doesn't find it easy. Pope Francis has also described prayer as a challenge - but a great adventure too. He has said:

'With a friend, we can speak and share our deepest secrets. With Jesus too, we can always have a conversation... Try to look for him, and you will have the beautiful experience of seeing that he is always at your side.' *Christus Vivit 81, 82*

Bear Grylls and Pope Francis are just two out of millions of people, whose friendship with Jesus inspires them to do extraordinary things and - more importantly - be instruments of God's love in the world.

From today, let's take up the challenge to deepen our friendship with Jesus. Start by remembering that he is already close at hand. Look for him in the actions of your friends, your family, strangers, and in the beauty of the world around you.

Find the space to speak with Jesus in your heart. Don't be afraid to be honest and open. Share with him as you would with a faithful friend. Then get to know him better by reading the Gospel. There you can discover the person Jesus is and the person he's calling you to be.

As we began today referencing Bear Grylls, let's conclude with a quote from his biography:

'This is the heart of what I found as a teenager: Christ comes to make us free, to bring us life in all its fulness. He is there to forgive us when we have messed up, and to be the backbone of our being.' *Mud, Sweat and Tears, Bear Grylls.*

Conclude this reflection with the EMM prayer, found at missio.org.uk/emm-schools-page/