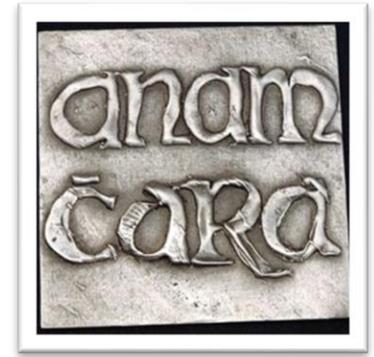


Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

September 8, 2020

Do you know the term, **Anam Cara**? I've only just discovered it. Apparently the term is a Celtic term for "soul friendship," and has been so for quite a few centuries. I learned about it from an interview with Pastor Jeff Mathis in a recent issue of *Nurturing Faith Journal*.



Apparently the term comes from monastic traditions in ancient Ireland and has to do with particular ways of sharing life together in the Body of Christ. An "Anam Cara," or "soul friend" is someone with whom we share the practical matters of life, reveal life's deep joys and sorrows, and provide for one another a sanctuary of trust and unconditional love.

Anam Cara friendships are one way to "be Christ" to one another. We sometimes say that "a sorrow shared is cut in half; and a joy shared is doubled"; and *Anam Cara* relationships are like that. The journey of life is made more bearable and more joyful when we travel together; and, like the two friends who journeyed to Emmaus on Resurrection Day, we often discover Jesus along the way.

According to Pastor Mathis, an *Anam Cara* friendship is a same-gender friendship that involves a commitment to protecting time for this relationship, and that includes a readiness to share one's inner journey with this friend. Here's his suggested way to do this:

1. Pray for God's guidance in choosing a friend to invite into *Anam Cara*.
2. Ask this friend to agree to meet with you or to talk with you for at least an hour a week for at least six weeks.
3. In those conversations, move through these four stages:
 - a. **STEP ONE: Check In**
 - i. Share the things that are holding your attention this week.
 - ii. What relationships do you feel particularly "tethered to" right now?
 - b. **STEP TWO: Go Deeper**
 - i. How is it with the deepest part of you?
 - ii. What's clearer now than it was when we were last together?
 - iii. What's going on in your deepest self that you've not shared with anyone?
 - c. **STEP THREE: Ask**
 - i. What are you sorry for and wish to seek God's forgiveness?
 - ii. After hearing your friend's confession, share the assurance of pardon from God's Word (such as 1 John 1:9).
 - d. **STEP FOUR: Pray**
 - i. What do you need from God right now?
 - ii. Hear a prayer offered on your behalf.

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One of the most famous friendships in the Bible is the one between my namesake, David, and King Saul's son, Jonathan. The beginning of their friendship is described like this: *After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself* (1 Samuel 18:1).

I have the names of nine men written beside that verse in my Bible, soul friends from each season of my life. I still keep in touch with all of them, most often with the two oldest, Dr. Hulitt Gloer, my best friend in high school, and Dr. Dwight Moody, my best friend in college. Each of these nine is an active churchman, and, as it happens, either a pastor or a deacon.

Although I've just learned the term *Anam Cara*, I've been doing this all my life. Soul friendships help us grow. They help us stay spiritually vibrant and healthy. And they provide the kind of accountability and companionship for which we have been created.

If you're married, I hope you have this kind of relationship with your mate. At the same time, there is no one relationship that can provide all that is needed for our growth, and an *Anam Cara* friend just might provide what is needed for you—for me—to flourish. Thanks to *Zoom*, *Facetime* and similar software, this person doesn't even need to be close by.

Perhaps this kind of thing is what Richard Gillard had in mind when he penned our hymn, "The Servant Song":

Brother, Sister, let me serve you. Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey. We're together on this road.
We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.

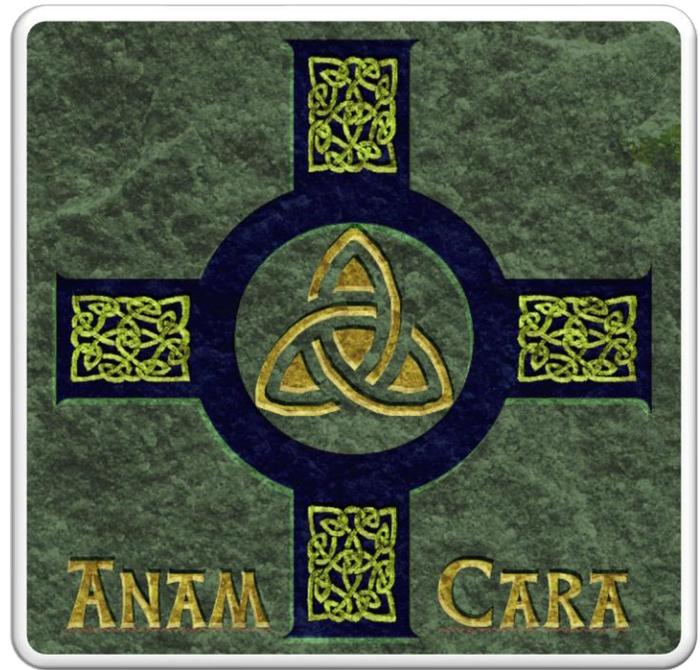
When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, Sister, let me serve you. Let me be as Christ to you.
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.

Ponder and Pray . . . Invite and Grow.

Dave





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