

# The power of a conversation

On Holy Thursday I got caught in a difficult conversation with someone. I don't believe I was responsible for making her angry, but her anger was directed at me.

I tried so hard to listen, to offer support and empathy, to have the conversation end in peace and understanding. There was too much to unravel, too much to try to explain, too much to hear. I didn't have all the answers, and the answers I had didn't satisfy her.

Afterward, I didn't sleep well. I wished I had avoided the whole exchange.

When I woke up, it was Good Friday, and the conversation was still echoing in my mind. I tried to tell myself that there was a reason for the timing. Maybe I needed to carry this through the day as Jesus carried so much to the cross for me. Even trying to view it through that lens didn't feel good. But we don't always get to feel good on Good Friday.

Then, a text came through with sad news. The father of one of my friends had passed away. And my whole day turned. I found myself remembering a completely different conversation—the last one I had had with him, an unexpected gift.

A few months ago, my husband, our sons, and I had gone to the hospital to visit my sister-in-law, whose time on earth was short. We knew it might be our last goodbye—and for me and our boys, it was. We were waiting for the elevator to take us to her floor when the doors opened, and there were my friend's parents.

It turned out that my friend's dad was in the hospital, too. He just happened to be taking a walk through the hallways when we bumped into him. We hugged and chatted, and then we went off to visit my husband's sister. We had a beautiful visit with her.

As we were leaving her room, I noticed that my friend's dad's room was on the same hallway. We had barely talked while boarding the elevator, and here was my chance to see him. I left the boys with my husband and went to spend just a few minutes with him.

When I walked into his room, he gave me a huge smile. We talked about our families—my children and his grandchildren. We discussed how much we enjoyed being connected on Facebook, how much he liked watching his daughter's friends and their families growing up. We talked briefly about his illness—but not much. He didn't sound concerned about it, and—except for being in the hospital bed—he looked wonderful. If my family hadn't been waiting for me, I could have talked with him for hours.

Then, in one elegant, spectacular move, I spilled an iced tea all over his hospital room floor. I ran for paper towels to try to mop it up, and we laughed together. Then we said a happy and casual goodbye.

I've been turning those two conversations over in my mind—a challenging one and a happy one. I often ask the Holy Spirit to help me find the right words to say to help me connect with the people in my life—including you. Words are important. They show love and truth. They can build up, or they can break down. Words have great power—as we can see in the words of the Gospels we hear through the Holy Triduum.

I also find myself thinking about perspective. On Good Friday it is hard to see the beauty through the darkness and the grief. On Good Friday it is finished. We have faith. We know that Easter will bring incredible joy. We know that not all is lost—that life wins out over death, that love overcomes all evil.

But on Good Friday, even knowing what we know about the joy that lies ahead, it's all right to sit with the sadness. On Holy Saturday we wait in quiet faith and hope for what we know will come. On Easter we will rejoice. But there's no need to rush through the Holy Triduum. Easter morning will come soon enough—and through the light of Easter, we will see Good Friday with a different understanding.

In these final hours before Easter, I hope the Holy Triduum is bringing you closer to Jesus.