



May 22, 2022

## Sixth Sunday of Easter

*"I pray...so that all may be one..." John 17:21*

*The second reading and Gospel this week are from the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
since we celebrate the Ascension in place of the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday.*



Dear Friends,

St Francis of Assisi had kindness without boundaries. It transcended differences of nationality, culture and religion. Over eight hundred years ago in 1219, St. Francis journeyed to Egypt to visit the Sultan Malik-el-Kamil. His journey was undertaken despite his poverty, scarce resources, the great distance, and differences of culture, language and religion. This journey took place during one of the crusades and St. Francis had to cross opposing military lines. This demonstrates the depth of his love which sought to embrace everyone.

St. Francis took Christ's command of love seriously. He expressed it in his love for all people and creation. He instilled this boundary crossing love in his brothers in the community. He told them that if they were to find themselves among the Muslims or non-believers, without denying their own identity, they were not *"engage in arguments or disputes but be subject to every human creature for God's sake."* Given the violent hostility of those times this was an extraordinary suggestion.

St Francis urged that all forms of hostility or conflict be avoided and instead a humble and fraternal respect be shown to those who do not share his faith. St Francis wasn't interested in engaging in a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines rather he merely spread the love of God.

Pope Francis began his 2020 pastoral letter, *Fratelli Tutti (Siblings All)—on Fraternity and Social Friendship*, with this story of his namesake. In a world where people are retreating into their social silos the pope urges us to cross boundaries, go to the peripheries and engage with those who are other than us. We do this for the welfare of all who live on the planet.

Among the ills that is dividing society is a technology and social media that purports to connect us but more often leaves us feeling isolated and disconnected. This eats away at the social fabric of communities throughout the world. It is not that technology is necessarily bad, it is how it is employed that can be destructive. Look at how many people especially youth base their self-worth on the number of likes that they do or do not receive. And extremist language generates "hits."

Consumerist individualism also drives a competitive spirit that sees other persons as simply obstacles to our own personal happiness. We end up treating others as annoyances with whom we can become increasingly aggressive. And in the crisis of pandemic, catastrophes, and hardships we can take on an *"every man for himself"* attitude.

One of the solutions that the pope proposes is recovering the virtue of kindness. Pope Francis points to St Paul who in the letter to the Galatians (5:22) describes kindness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The word Paul uses for kindness describes an attitude that is gentle, pleasant, supportive and not rude or coarse.

Pope Francis says that individuals who possess kindness *"help make people's lives more bearable, especially by sharing the weight of their problems, needs and fears."* This way of acting toward others can take different forms: *"an act of kindness, a concern not to offend by word or deed, a readiness to alleviate burdens."* Kindness speaks words of comfort, strength, and encouragement, never words that demean, sadden, anger, or show contempt for others.

The type of unifying love to which the Lord Jesus calls us is built on kindness. Kindness frees us from the cruelty of our times. It frees us to see others as people who also have a right to be happy. A "excuse me," or "thank you" creates a healthy social environment where misunderstandings can be overcome, and conflict reduced. Kindness works because it shows esteem and respect for others, *"once kindness becomes a culture within society it transforms"* relationships and lifestyles to create a more harmonious society. May the Spirit gift us with a kindness that unites all together!

Christ is Risen!

*Fr Ron*

*Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: [www.anne.church](http://www.anne.church)*