

Friendship

This coming Sunday, the 30th of July, is International Friendship Day. This special day was proclaimed in 2011 by the United Nations General Assembly with the idea that friendship between peoples, countries, cultures and individuals can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities.

To quote from the official webpage:

“Our world faces many challenges, crises and forces of division — such as poverty, violence, and human rights abuses — among many others — that undermine peace, security, development and social harmony among the world's peoples.

To confront those crises and challenges, their root causes must be addressed by promoting and defending a shared spirit of human solidarity that takes many forms — the simplest of which is friendship.

Through friendship — by accumulating bonds of camaraderie and developing strong ties of trust — we can contribute to the fundamental shifts that are urgently needed to achieve lasting stability, weave a safety net that will protect us all, and generate passion for a better world where all are united for the greater good.”

Friendship contrasts strongly with, and is a powerful antidote to, the opposing forces we sadly see in our world today: conflict, violence, mistrust, exploitation, selfishness and greed. We need so much the positive values fostered so naturally and simply by friendship.

In our Bible reading just now (John 15.12-17) we hear the supreme expression of friendship in our Lord's words to his disciples on the evening before his arrest and crucifixion. Jesus calls his disciples his friends. And he will display the full extent of his friendship by laying down his own life not just for them but for the whole of humanity. And the key is love.

At the very heart of God's will for his creation is his love for us and our love for one another. Is that simply a utopian dream, misplaced optimism, wishful thinking? For us as Christians the answer is: no. For we believe that ultimately goodness and love will triumph. And a good way to start is through genuine and sincere friendship, particularly with those with whom we may not have a natural affinity. That begins of course at the personal level but can move outwards to the local, national and even international spheres. We just need as human beings, with God's help, the will to persevere.

28th July 2017
Kingsley Boulton