

“Ye Are My Friends”

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“Dakayo Ti Gagayyemko”

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Ti Pitupulo

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The Savior’s declaration “ye are my friends” is a clarion call to build higher and holier relationships among all of God’s children.

In a world filled with contention and division, where civil discourse has been replaced with judgment and scorn, and friendships are defined by -isms and -ites, I have come to know that there is a clear, simple, and divine example we can look to for unity, love, and belonging. That example is Jesus Christ. I testify that He is the great unifier.

We Are His Friends

In December of 1832, as “appearances of troubles among the nations” were becoming “more visible” than at any time since the organization of the Church, Latter-day Saint leaders in Kirtland, Ohio, gathered for a conference. They prayed “separately and vocally to the Lord to reveal his will unto [them].” In acknowledgement of the prayers of these faithful members during times of intense trouble, the Lord comforted them, addressing the Saints three times with two powerful words: “my friends.”

Jesus Christ has long called His faithful followers His friends. Fourteen times in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Savior uses the term friend to define a sacred and cherished relationship. I am not talking about the word friends as the world defines it—subject to social media followers or “likes.” It cannot be captured in a

Ti panangipakdaar ti Mangisalakan a “dakayo ti gagayyemko” ket maysa nga awis a mangbangon iti nangatngato ken nasansantuan a panaglalan-gen iti amin nga annak ti Dios.

Iti lubong a napno iti panagsusupiat ken pannakabingbingay, a ti nainnayad a panagsasar-ita ket nasukatanen iti panaghusga ken panaglais, a ti panaggagayyem ket maituding babaen dagiti ideolohia ken ragup, naammuak nga adda maysa a nalawag, simple, ken nadiosan a pagwadan a mabalintayo a tuladen para iti panagkaykaysa, ayat, ken pannakaibilang. Ni Jesucristo dayta a pagwadan. Paneknekak nga Isu ti naindaklan a mamagkaykaysa.

Datayo Dagiti Gagayyemna

Idi Disiembre ti 1832, bayat “a makitkitan dagiti riribuk kadagiti pagilian ket “nagbalin-en a nalawlawag” ngem iti aniaman a panawen manipud pay idi nabukel ti Simbaan, naguummong dagiti Santo idia Kirtland, Ohio, para iti komperensia. Nagkararagda a “bukbukodda ken sibabatat tapno ipalgakna ti pagayatanna [kadakuada].” Kas sungbat kadagiti kararag dagitoy a napudno a miembro iti panawen ti nakaro a riribuk, liniwliwa ida ti Apo, nga inaw-awagan-na dagiti Santo iti namintallo a daras iti dua a makaabbukay a balikas: “dagiti gagayyemko.”

Nabayagen nga inawagan ni Jesucristo dagiti napudno a pasurotna kas gagayyemna. Mamin-sangapulo-ket-uppat a daras iti Doktrina ken Katulagan, nga inusar ti Mangisalakan ti balikas agayyema mangiladawan iti sagrado ken maipat-pateg a relasion. Saanko nga ibagbaga maipapan iti balikas agayyemkas iti panangilawlawag ti

hashtag or a number on Instagram or X.

Admittedly, as a teenager, I remember dreaded conversations when I heard those painful words “Hey, can we just be friends?” or “Let’s just stay in the friend zone.” Nowhere in holy writ do we hear Him say, “Ye are just my friends.” Rather, He taught that “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” And “ye are they whom my Father hath given me; ye are my friends.”

The sentiment is clear: the Savior numbers each of us and watches over us. This watchcare is not trivial or insignificant. Rather, it is exalting, elevating, and eternal. I see the Savior’s declaration “ye are my friends” as a clarion call to build higher and holier relationships among all of God’s children “that we may be one.” We do this as we come together seeking both opportunities to unite and a sense of belonging for all.

We Are One in Him

The Savior beautifully demonstrated this in His call to “come, follow me.” He drew upon the gifts and individual attributes of a diverse group of followers to call His Apostles. He called fishermen, zealots, brothers known for their thunderous personalities, and even a tax collector. Their belief in the Savior and desire to draw unto Him united them. They looked to Him, saw God through Him, and “straightway left their nets, and followed Him.”

I too have seen how building higher and holier relationships brings us together as one. My wife, Jennifer, and I were blessed to raise our five children in New York City. There in that busy metropolis, we formed precious and sacred relationships with neighbors, school friends, business associates, faith leaders, and fellow Saints.

In May of 2020, just as the world was grappling with the spread of a global pandemic, members of the New York City Commission of

lubong iti daytoy—a maibatay iti followers wenno “likes” iti social media. Saan a maipakita iti hashtag wenno numero iti Instagram wenno X.

Pudno, kas maysa a tin-edyer, malagipko dagiti nakaam-amak a saritaan idi kas iti “Hey, mabalin kadi nga aggayyemta laeng?” wenno “Agtalinaedta lattan iti friend zone.” Awan ti mabasa iti nasantuan a kasuratan a kinunana, “Gagayyemkayo laeng.” Ketdi, insurona nga “awan ti addaan iti dakdakkal nga ayat ngem daytoy, ti mangted ti biagna gapu kadagiti gagayyemna.” Ken “dakayo ti inted kaniak ti Amak; dakayo ti gagayyemko.”

Nalawag ti karirinkana: ibilang ti Mangisalakan ti tunggal maysa kadayo ken aywanannatayo. Saan a gagangay wenno awan pateg daytoy a napasnek a panangaywan. Imbes ketdi, mangitan-ok, mangitag-ay, ken agnanayon dayta. Ibilangko ti panangibaga ti Mangisalakan a “dakayo ti gagayyemko” kas maysa nga awis a mangbangon kadagiti nangatangato ken nasansantuana relasion iti amin nga annak ti Dios “tapno agkaykaysatayo.” Ar-aramidentayo daytoy iti panagtitipontayo a mangbirok kadagiti gundaway a makapagkaykaysa ken maibilang ti amin.

Maymaysatayo Kenkuana

Napintas ti panangipakita ti Mangisalakan itoy iti awisna nga “umaykayo, sumurot kaniak” I-nusarna dagiti sagut ken individual a kababalin ti nadumaduma a grupo dagiti pasurotna tapno awaganna dagiti Apostolna. Inawaganna dagiti mangngalap, zealots, kakabsat a maam-ammo iti naariwawa ti personalidadda, ken uray ti maysa nga agsingsingir iti buis. Ti pammatida iti Mangisalakan ken ti tarigagayda nga uma-sideg Kenkuana ti namagkaykaysa kadakuada. Kimmitada Kenkuana, nakitada ti Dios babaen Kenkuana, ket “pinanawanda dagiti iketda, ket simmurotda Kenkuana.”

Nakitak met no kasano a ti panangibangon iti nangatangato ken nasansantuan a linnangen ket mangisangbay iti panagkaykaysa kadayo. Nabendisionankami ken ni Jennifer a nangpaddakkel iti lima nga annakmi iti New York City. Sadiay iti dayta nga okupado a metropolis, nangbukelkami iti napateg ken sagrado a panaglilinnangen kadagiti kaarruba, gagayyem, kakadua iti negosio, lider ti pammati, ken pada a Sasanto.

Idi Mayo ti 2020, bayat ti panagrigrigat ti lubong gapu iti panagsaknap ti sangalubongan a pandemia, nakiddaw kadagiti miembro ti New

Religious Leaders met virtually in an abruptly called meeting. There was no agenda. No special guests. Just a request to come together and discuss the challenges we were all facing as faith leaders. The Centers for Disease Control had just reported that our city was the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. This meant no more gathering. No more coming together.

For these religious leaders, removing the personal ministry, the congregational gathering, and the weekly worship was a devastating blow. Our small group—which included a cardinal, reverend, rabbi, imam, pastor, monsignor, and an elder—listened to, consoled, and supported one another. Instead of focusing on our differences, we saw what we had in common. We spoke of possibilities and then probabilities. We rallied and responded to questions about faith and the future. And then we prayed. Oh, how we prayed.

In a richly diverse city filled with complexity and colliding cultures, we saw our differences dissipate as we came together as friends with one voice, one purpose, and one prayer.

No longer were we looking across the table at each other but heavenward with each other. We left each subsequent meeting more united and ready to pick up our “shovels” and go to work. The collaboration that resulted and the service rendered to thousands of New Yorkers taught me that in a world calling for division, distance, and disengagement, there is always much more that unites us than divides us. The Savior pled, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.”

Brothers and sisters, we must stop looking for reasons to divide and instead seek opportunities to “be one.” He has blessed us with unique gifts and attributes that invite learning from one another and personal growth. I often told my university students that if I do what you do and you do what I do, we don’t need each other. But because you don’t do what I do and I don’t do what you do, we do need each other. And that

York City Commission of Religious Leaders nga agatendar a dagus iti virtual a miting. Awan ti adyenda. Awan dagiti espesial a sangaili. Maysa laeng a kiddaw nga agtataripnong ken pagsasaritaan dagiti karit a sangsanguenmi kas lider ti pammati. Kaipadpadamag laeng ti Centers for Disease Control a ti siudadmi ti sentro ti COVID-19 a pandemia iti Estados Unidos. Kayatn a sawen daytoy nga awanen ti panagtataripnong. Awanen ti panagtitipon.

Para kadagitoy a lider ti relihion, ti panna-kaikkat ti personal a panagministro, ti panagtataripnong iti kongregasion, ken ti linawas a panagdaydayaw ket nakauppapay unay. Ti bassit a grupomi—a pakairamanan ti maysa a kardinal, reverendo, rabbi, imam, pastor, monsignor, ken elder—ket nagdidinnengngeg, naglilinniwiwa, ken nagsisinnuporta. Imbes nga ipamaysami dagiti pagdudumaanmi, nakitami dagiti pagpadaanmi. Nagsasaritaanmi dagiti posibilidad ken dagiti probabilidad. Nagtataripnongkami ket sinungbatanmi dagiti saludsod maipapan iti pammati ken iti masanguanan. Ket kalpasanna nagkararagkami. O, anian a panagkararagmi.

Iti maysa a nabaknang a siudad a napnuan iti parikut ken agduduma a kultura, nakitami a saanen nga agduduma dagiti kapanunotanmi idi nagkaykaysakami kas aggagayyem nga addaan iti maymaysa a timek, maymaysa a panggep, ken maymaysa a kararag.

Saankamin nga agkikinnita iti labes ti lamisaan no di ketdi agkikinnitakamin iti langit. Dagiti simmaruno a miting, ad-adda pay a nagkaykaysakami ken nakasaganakamin a mangala iti “palami” ket mapankami agtrabaho. Ti nagbanagan ti panagtitinnulong ken ti serbisio a naited kadagiti taga-New York ti nangisuro kaniak nga iti lubong nga addaan iti panagbibingay, ken panaggiinnadayo, ken panagsisisna, ad-adu pay laeng ti mamagkaykaysa kadatayo ngem iti mamagbibingay kadatayo. Nagpakaasi ti Mangisalakan, “Agkaykaysakayo; ket no saankayo nga agkaykaysa saankayo a kukua”

Kakabsat, isardengtayo ti agsapul kadagiti rason a mamagsisina ngem ketdi agsapultayo kadagiti gundaway a “makapagkaykaysa.” Binendisionannatayo iti naidumdima a sagsagut ken kababalin a mangyawis iti panagsursuro iti maysa ken maysa ken bukod a panagduras. Masansan nga ibagak kadagiti estudiantek iti unibersidad a no aramidek ti ar-aramidenyo ket aramidenyo ti ar-aramidek, saantayon a

need brings us together. To divide and conquer is the adversary's plan to destroy friendships, families, and faith. It is the Savior who unites.

We Belong to Him

One of the promised blessings of “becoming one” is a powerful sense of belonging. Elder Quentin L. Cook taught that “the essence of truly belonging is to be one with Christ.”

On a recent visit with my family to the West African country of Ghana, I was enamored with a local custom. Upon arriving at a church or home, we were greeted with the words “you are welcome.” When food was served, our host would announce, “You are invited.” These simple greetings were extended with purpose and intentionality. You are welcome. You are invited.

We place similar sacred declarations on our meetinghouse doors. But the sign Visitors Welcome is not enough. Do we warmly welcome all who come through the doors? Brothers and sisters, it is not enough to just sit in the pews. We must heed the Savior's call to build higher and holier relationships with all of God's children. We must live our faith! My father often reminded me that simply sitting in a pew on Sunday doesn't make you a good Christian any more than sleeping in a garage makes you a car.

We must live our life so that the world does not see us but sees Him through us. This does not take place only on Sundays. It takes place at the grocery store, the gas pump, the school meeting, the neighborhood gathering—all places where baptized and unbaptized members of our family work and live.

I worship on Sunday as a reminder that we need each other and together we need Him. Our unique gifts and talents that differentiate us in a secular world unite us in a sacred space. The

kasapulan ti maysa ken maysa. Ngem gapu ta diyo aramiden ti ar-aramidek ken diak ar-aramiden ti ar-aramidenyo, kasapulantayo ti tunggal maysa. Ket dayta a kasapulan ti mamagkaykaysa kadatayo. Ti panagbibingay ken panangparmek ket plano ti kabusor a mangdadael kadagiti ti panaggagayyem, pamilia, ken pammati. Ti Mangisalakana ti mamagkaykaysa.

Kukuanatayo

Maysa kadagiti naikari a bendision ti “panagkaykaysa” ket ti nabileg a pannakaibilang. Insuro ni Elder Quentin L. Cook a “ti kaipapana ti pudno a pannakaibilang ket ti pannakikaykaysa ken Cristo.”

Iti nabiit pay a panagpasiarmi a sangapamiliaan idia Ghana, maysa a pagilian iti Africa, naay-ayoak iti maysa a lokal a kaugalian sadiay. Apaman a makadanonkami iti simbaan wenno pagtaengan, kablaawandakami iti “naragsak nga isasangbay.” No maidasar ti taraon, ipakaammo ti nangsangaili kadakami iti, “Maawiskayo.” Dagito a simple a kablaaw ket nairanta ken naigagara. Naragsak nga isasangbay. Maawiskayo.

Mangikabiltayo met kadagiti kasta a sagrado a panangipakdaar iti ruangan dagiti meetinghouse-tayo. Ngem saan nga umdas ti maysa a karatula a Visitors Welcome. Nabara kadi ti panangpasangbaytayo ti amin nga umay kadagiti ruangan? Kakabsat, saan nga umdas ti agtugaw laeng kadagiti bangko. Masapul nga ipangagtayo ti awag ti Mangisalakana a mangbangon kadagiti nangatangto ken nasansantuan a linnangen iti amin nga annak ti Dios. Masapul nga agbiagtayo a maitunos iti pammatitayo! Masansan nga ipalagip ni tatangko a ti panagtugaw iti bangko iti Domingo ket saanen a mangaramid kenka a maysa a naimbag a Kristiano ngemiti panagturog iti maysa a garahe ket maangaramid kenka a maysa a kotse.

Masapul nga agbiagtayo a nasayaat tapno ti lubong makitana ti Dios babaen kadatayo. Saan laeng a Domingo a mapasamak daytoy. Mapasamak daytoy iti groseri, iti paggasolinaan, iti miting iti eskuelaan, iti ummung ti sangakaarubaan—amin a lugar a pagtrabahuan ken pag-nanaedan dagiti nabuniagan ken di nabuniagan a miembro ti pamiliatayo.

Agdaydayawak iti Domingo kas palagip a kasapulantayo ti tunggal maysa ken kasapulantayo Isuna. Dagiti sagut ken talentotayo a mangiduma kadatayo iti sekular a lubong ti

Savior has called upon us to help one another, lift one another, and edify each other. This is what He did when He healed the woman with an issue of blood, cleansed the leper who pled for His mercy, counseled the young prince who asked what more he could do, loved Nicodemus, who knew but faltered in his faith, and sat with the woman at the well, who did not fit the custom of the day but to whom He declared His messianic mission. This to me is church—a place of gathering and recovery, repair and refocus. As President Russell M. Nelson taught: “The gospel net is the largest net in the world. God has invited all to come unto Him. ... There is room for everyone.”

Some may have had experiences that make you feel you do not belong. The Savior’s message to you and me is the same: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The gospel of Jesus Christ is the perfect place for us. Coming to church offers the hope of better days, the promise that you are not alone, and a family who needs us as much as we need them. Elder D. Todd Christofferson affirms that “being one with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is without doubt the ultimate in belonging.” To any who have stepped away and are seeking a chance to return, I offer an eternal truth and invitation: You belong. Come back. It is time.

In a contentious and divided world, I testify that the Savior Jesus Christ is the great unifier. May I invite each of us to be worthy of the Savior’s invitation to “be one” and to boldly declare, as He did, “Ye are my friends.” In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

mamagkaykaysa kadatayo iti sagrado a lugar. Inawisnatayo ti Mangisalakan nga agtitinnulong, agpipinnaregta, ken mangitandudo iti tunggal maysa. Daytoy ti inaramidna idi pinaimbagna ti babai nga agpabpabulos iti dara, dinalusanna ti agkukutel a nangdawat iti asina, binalakadanna ti agtutubo a prinsipio a nagsaludsod no ania pay ti mabalinna nga aramiden, inayatna ni Nicodemo a makaammo ngem nagpangpangadua iti pammatina, ken nakitugaw iti babai iti bubon a saan a mayannurot iti kaugalian iti dayta nga aldaw ngem impakdaarna ti misionna kas mesias. Para kaniak dayta ti simbaan---maysa a lugar a pagtataripnongan ken pagpaimbagan, pagaturan ken pagpokusan manen. Kas insuro ni Presidente Russel M. Nelson: “Ti ebangelio ti kadakkelan nga iket iti lubong. Inawis ti Dios tiaminnga umay Kenkuana. ... Adda lugar para iti tunggal maysa.”

Mabalin nga adda dagiti padasyon a nari-knayo a dikayo maibilang. Agpada ti mensahe ti Mangisalakan kaniak ken kadakayo, “Umaykayo kaniak, dakayo amin nga agrigrigat ken madagdagsenan, ta paginanaenkayto.” Ti ebangelio ni Jesucristo ti naan-anay a lugar para kadatayo. Ti yaay iti simbaan ti mangidiaaya iti namnama a nasaysayaatto ti masakbayan, ti kari a saankayo nga agmaymaysa, ken ti pamilia a makasapul kadatayo a kas iti panagkasapulantayo met kadakuada. Patalgedan ni Elder D. Todd Christofferson a “ti pannakikaykaysa iti Ama, Anak, ken ti Nasantuan nga Espiritu, awan duadua nga isu ti kangrunaan iti pannakaibilang.” Iti siasinoman nga immadayo ken agsapsapul iti gundaway nga agsubli, idiayak ti agnanayon a kinapudno ken awis. Maibilangkayo. Agsublikayo. Daytoy ti panawen.

Iti maysa a mannakisupiat ken nabingbingay a lubong, paneknekak a ti Mangisalakan a ni Jesucristo ti naindakan a mamagkaykaysa. Awisek ti tunggal maysa kadatayo nga agbalin a maikari iti awis ti Mangisalakan nga “agkaykaysakayo” ken situtured a mangipakdaar, a kas iti inaramidna, “Dakayo ti gagayyemko.” Iti sagrado a nagan ni Jesucristo, amen.