

“Ye Are My Friends”

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Of the Seventy

“Ianareo no namako”

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Ao amin’ny Fitopololahy

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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 rela-

Nampianatra ny Mpamonjy fa rehefa “antsoina ho amin’ny filazantsara[ny] maharitra mandrakizay [isika] ary manao fanekena amin’ny fanekempihavanana maharitra mandrakizay, dia isaina ho toy ny siran’ny tany [isika].”

Ao amin’ny tontolo feno fifandirana sy fisaratsarahana, izay ahitana fa ny fifandraisana amim-panajana dia nosoloana ho fitsarana sy fanesoana, ary ny finamanana dia voafaritra amin’ny alalan’ny -isma sy ny -ita, dia lasa fantatro fa misy ohatra mazava sy tsotra ary masina azon-tsika jerena ho an’ny firaisankina sy fitiavana ary ny fahatsapana ho manana toerana. I Jesoa Kristy izany ohatra izany. Mijoro ho vavolombelona aho fa Izy no ilay Mpampiray.

Namany isika

Tamin’ny volana desambra 1832, rehefa nanomboka “niharihary kokoa” ireo “endrika adiady nanerana ireo firenena” noho izay nisy hatrizay hatramin’ny fotoana nananganana ny Fiangonana, dia nivory ireo Mpitarika Olomasin’ny Andro Farany tao Kirtland, Ohio mba hanao fihaonambe. Nivavaka “nitokana sy tamin’ny feo avo tamin’ny Tompo izy ireo, [nosoloin’ny olona iray tena], mba hanambarany ny sitrapony amin’[izy ireo].” Ho fanekena ny vavak’ireo mpikambana mahatoky ireo nandritra ny fotoan-tsarotra dia nampionona azy ireo ny Tompo, ka niantso ny Olomasina intelo tamin’ny teny mafonja roa—“ry sakaizako.”

Efa hatry ny ela i Jesoa Kristy no niantso ireo mpanara-dia Azy mahatoky hoe sakaizany. Nampiasain’ny Mpamonjy inefatra amin’ny folo ny teny hoesakaizaao amin’ny Fotopampianarana

tionship. 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 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

sy Fanekehampihavanana mba hamaritana fifandraisana masina sy ankamamiana. Tsy miresaka momba ny teny hoenamana araka ny famaritana’izao tontolo izao azy aho—natao ho an’ireo mpanaraka ao amin’ny tambajotran-tserasera na ireo “j’aime.” Tsy azo faritana amin’ny hashtag na ny isana mpanaraka ao amin’ny Instagram na ny X (Twitter taloha) izany.

Ekena fa tamin’ny fahatanorako dia tsaroako ireo resaka nampatahotra rehefa nandre ireo teny maharary hoe “He! mety ve raha mpinamana fotsiny isika?” na hoe “aleo mijanona ho mpinamana fotsiny.” Tsy misy na aiza na aiza ao amin’ny soratra masina handrenesantsika Azy miteny hoe: “Ianareo dia namako fotsiny”. Nampianatra kosa izy hoe: “Tsy misy manana fitiavana lehibe noho izao, dia ny manolotra ny ainy hamonjy ny sakaizany.” Ary koa, “Ianareo no ireo izay efa nomen’ny Raiko Ahy; ianareo no namako.”

Mazava ilay fahatsapana—ny Mpamonjy dia manisa antsika tsirairay ary miambina antsika. Ity fiahiana ity dia tsy hoe ataotaony fahatany fotsiny na tsy misy dikany. Fa mampisandratra sy mampisondrotra ary mandrakizay kosa. Mahita ny fanambaran’ny Mpamonjy hoe “Ianareo no namako” aho ho toy ny antso mazava mba hamolavola fifandraisana ambony sy masina kokoa an’ivon’ny zanak’ Andriamanitra rehetra “mba hahatonga antsika ho iray.” Ho vitantsika izany rehefa mikatsaka miaraka ny fahafahana miray hina sy ny fahatsapana ho manana toerana ho an’ny rehetra isika.

Iray ao Aminy isika

Nanaho izany tamin’ny fomba kanto ny Mpamonjy tamin’ny antsony hoe: “avia, manaraha Ahy.” Nampiasa ireo fanomezam-pahasovanana sy toetra manokana ananan’ny vondrona mpanara-dia isan-karazany Izy mba hiantsoana ireo Apôstôliny. Niantso mpanarato Izy, Zelota, mpirahalany fantatra amin’ny fananana toetra tena mazoto izaitsizy, ary mpamory hetra mihitsy aza. Nampiray azy ireo ny finoany ny Mpamonjy sy ny fanirian’izy ireo hanatona Azy. Nikatsaka ny fitarihan’ Andriamanitra avy amin’i Jesoa kristy izy ireo sy nahita an’ Andriamanitra tamin’ny alalany, ary “dia nandao ny harato niaraka tamin’izay izy ka nanaraka Azy”.

Izaho ko dia nahita fa ny fananganana fifandraisana mihaja sy masina kokoa dia mampiray antsika. I Jennifer vadiko sy ny tenako dia voatahy mba hitaiza ireo zanakay lahy sy

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 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

vavy dimy tao amin'ny tanànan'i New York. Tao amin'io tanàn-dehibe be mponina io, dia nanangana fifandraisana sarobidy sy masina tamin'ireo mpifanolobodirindrina, namana tany an-tsekoly, mpiara-miasa, mpitondra fivavahana avy amin'ny finoana samihafa ary ireo Olomasina mpiara-belona izahay.

Tamin'ny mey 2020, raha niady mafy tamin'ny fihanaky ny areti-mifindra maneran-tany izao tontolo izao, dia novoriana an-tsolosaina tampoka ny mpikambana ao amin'ny Vaomieran'ny mpitondra fivavahana avy amin'ny finoana samihafa tao New York. Tsy nisy fandaharam-poana voarafitra. Tsy nisy vahiny manokana nasaina. Fangatahana fotsiny mba hiaraha-misa sy hifanakalo hevitra momba ireo fanamby natrehany rehetra amin'ny maha-mpitondra fivavahana anay. Vao avy nitatitra ny Foibe Fanaraha-maso ny aretina fa ny tanànanay no faritra tena ihomboan'ny valanaretina COVID-19 teto Etazonia. Midika izany fa tsy hisy intsony fiangonana. Tsy hisy intsony fivoriana mivantana.

Ho an'ireo mpitondra fivavahana ireo, ny fanesorana ny fanompoan'ny tena manokana sy ny fiangonan'ny daholobe ary ny fitsaohana isan-kerinandro dia dona nandravarava. Nifampihaino sy nifampionona ary nifanohana ny vondrona kely iray nisy anay, anisan'izany ny kardinaly, ny réverend, ny raby, ny imam, ny pasitera, ny mpampianatra, ary ny loholona iray. Tsy nifantoka tamin'ny tsy fitovianay izahay, fa niara-nahatakatra ny zavatra niombonanay kosa. Niresaka momba ny zavatra azo atao izahay, ary avy eo ireo vina. Niray hina izahay ary namaly ireo fanontaniana momba ny finoana sy ny hoavy. Dia nivavaka izahay avy eo. Eny, tena nivavaka mafy.

Tao amin'ny tanàna iray feno karazan-javatra feno fifamahofahoana sy kolontsaina mifanipaka, dia hitanay fa levona ny tsy fitovian-kevitray rehefa niara-niasa tamin'ny naha mpinamana tamin'ny feo iray sy tanjona iray ary vavaka iray izahay.

Tsy nifantoka tamin'ny tsy fitoviany intsony ny tsirairay, fa niray saina nangataka fanampiana tamin' Andriamanitra kosa. Niray saina kokoa izahay isaky ny fivoriana manaraka ary niomana hanatanteraka asa fanompoana. Ny fiaraha-miasa naterak'izany sy ny asa fanompoana natao ho an'ny mponin'i New York an'arivony dia nampianatra ahy fa ao anatin'ny tontolo iray mitaky fisaraham-bazana, fifanalavirana, ary

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 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.

fihalangalanana, dia misy betsaka kokoa hatrany ireo zavatra mampiray antsika noho ny mampisara-bazana antsika. Niangavy ny Mpamonjy hoe: “Aoka ho iray ianareo; ary raha tsy iray ianareo dia tsy Ahy.”

Ry rahalahy sy anabavy, tsy maintsy manajanona ny fitadiavana ireo antony mampisara-bazana isika ary hikatsaka kosa ny fahafahana mba “ho iray”. Nitahy antsika tamin’ny fanomezam-pahasoavana sy toetra tsy manam-paharoa Izy, izay mamporisika antsika hifampianatra ary ny fivoaran’ny tena manokana. Matetika aho no niteny tamin’ny mpianatro eny amin’ny oniversite fa raha manao izay ataonareo aho ary manao izay ataoko ianareo, dia tsy mifampila isika. Kanefa satria tsy manao izay ataoko ianareo ary tsy manao izay ataonareo aho, dia mifampila isika. Ary izany fifampilana izany no mampiray antsika. Ny mampisara-bazana sy manjakazaka no drafitry ny fahavalo mba handravana ny finamanana sy ny fianakaviana ary ny finoana. Ny Mpamonjy kosa no mampiray.

Manana toerana ao Aminy isika

Iray amin’ireo fitahiana nampanantenain’ny hoe “lasa iray” ny fahatsapana mahery vaika ho manana toerana. Nampianatra ny Loholona Quentin L. Cook fa “ny fototry ny hoe tena manan-toerana ao amin’ny vondrona iray dia ny hoe iray ao amin’i Kristy.”

Tamin’ny fitsidihako niaraka tamin’ny fianakaviako vao haingana tany Ghana, tany Afrika Andrefana, dia nahasarika ahy ny fomba amam-panao teo an-toerana iray. Rehefa tonga tany am-piangonana na tao an-trano izahay, dia notsenaina tamin’ny teny hoe “tonga soa ianareo”. Rehefa naroso ny sakafo, dia nilaza ny mpampiantrano anay hoe: “Voasa ianareo.” Ireo fiarahabana tsotra ireo dia natao tamin’ny fo feno finiavana sy nahim-po tanteraka. Tonga soa ianareo. Voasa ianareo.

Mametraka filazana masina mitovy amin’izany isika eo amin’ny varavaran’ny trano fivoriant-sika. Tsy ampy anefa ilay soratra hoe Tonga soa ny mpitsidika. Moa ve isika mandray am-pitiana izay rehetra miditra eo am-baravarana? Ry rahalahy sy anabavy, tsy ampy ny mipetraka eo amin’ny dabilio fotsiny. Tsy maintsy manaraka ny antson’ny Mpamonjy isika mba hanangana fifandraisana mihaja sy masina kokoa eo amin’ireo zanak’ Andriamanitra rehetra. Tsy maintsy maneho ny finoantsika amin’ny asa

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 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 has 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 invi-

isika! Nampahatsiahy ahy matetika ny raiko fa ny fipetrahana eo amin’ny dabilio fotsiny amin’ny alahady dia tsy hahatonga anao ho Kristianina tsara, toy ny hoe ny matory ao anaty garazy dia tsy hahatonga anao ho lasa fiara.

Tsy maintsy miaina ny fiainantsika amin’ny fomba tsy hahitan’izao tontolo izao antsika isika fa hahitany amin’ny alalan’ny asantsika an’i Jesoa Kristy kosa. Tsy ny alahady ihany no hanaovana izany. Eny amin’ny fivarotana enta-madinika, tobin-dasantsy, fivoriana-tsekoly, fivoriana tsotra ataon’ny mpiara-monina—ny toerana rehetra iasana sy iainan’ny zanak’ Andriamanitra rehetra, vita batisa na tsia, no hanaovana izany.

Mitsaoka isika ny alahady ho fampahatsiahivana fa mifampila isika ary miaraka mila Azy. Ny fanomezam-pahasoavana sy ny talenta tsy manam-paharoa ananantsika izay mampiavaka antsika amin’ity tontolo ara-nofo ity dia mampiray antsika amin’ny toerana masina iray. Niantso antsika ny Mpamonjy mba hifanampy sy hifanandratra ary hifankahery. Izany no nataony rehefa nanasitrana ilay vehivavy nitsi-drà Izy, nanadio ilay boka izay nitalaho ny famindram-pony, nanoro hevitra ilay printsy tanora izay nanontany hoe inona koa no tsara hafa azony atao, nitia an’i Nikodemosa izay nahafantatra nefa narefo finoana, ary niara-nipetraka tamin’ity vehivavy teo am-pantsakana Izy, izay tsy araka ny fomban’ny fiarahamonina tamin’izany andro izany, izay nanambarany ny iraka maha-Mesia Azy. Izany no atao hoe fiangonana amiko—toerana iray fanangonana sy fanasitranana, fanamboarana ary fifantohana indray. Araka ny nampianarin’ny Filoha Russell M. Nelson: “Ny haraton’ny filazantsara no harato faran’izay lehibe indrindra eto amin’izao tontolo izao. Manasa ny rehetrahanatona Azy Andriamanitra. ... Misy toerana ho an’ny rehetra ao.”

Ny olona sasany dia mety efa nanana traikefa izay mahatonga anao hahatsapa fa tsy manana anjara toerana ao ianao. Satria ny tanjon’i Kristy dia miantso antsika miaraka amin’ity fampanantenana maharitra mandrakizay ity: “Mankanesa aty amiko hianareo rehetra izay miasa fatratra sy mavesatra entana, fa Izaho no hanome anareo fitsaharana.” Ny filazantsaran’i Jesoa Kristy no toerana tonga lafatra ho antsika. Ny fahatongavana any am-piangonana dia manome fanantenana hoavy mahafinaritra, fampanantenana fa tsy irery ianao, ary mpiara-mivavaka izay mila antsika tahaka ny ilantsika azy. Nanambara ny

tation: 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.

Loholona D. Todd Christofferson fa "ny maha iray antsika ao amin'ny Ray sy ny Zanaka ary ny Fanahy Masina no tsy isalasalana fa faratampony amin'ny fahatsapana ho manana toerana." Ho an'izay rehetra nandao sy mitady fahafahana hiverina dia manolotra fahamarinana sy fanasana mandrakizay aho: Manana toerana ianareo. Miverena. Fotoana izao.

Ao anatin'ny tontolo mifanditra sy misaratsaraka iray, dia mijoro ho vavolombelona aho fa ny Mpamonjy Jesoa Kristy no ilay mpampiray lehibe. Manasa antsika tsirairay avy aho mba ho mendrika ny fanasan'ny Mpamonjy mba "ho iray" ary hanambara amim-pahasahiana toy ny nataony hoe "Ianareo no namako." Amin'ny anarana masin'i Jesoa Kristy, amena.