

INTO YOUR HANDS – Together On Life's Journey

Way back in the early 1970s, there was an advertisement for Coca-Cola that became quite popular. The soda pop company had assembled young people from all over the world on a hilltop in Italy. Together they sang, "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony." The decade had begun with wars, crisis, and cultural change. That Coca-Cola commercial attempted to awaken hearts to a new hope that perhaps there might be a better way for us to live together as human family.

Together with that song, I hold a treasured memory from the early 1970s of my brother and me sharing a bottle of Coca-Cola as we sat together under the pines in the woods of our grandparents' farm. My brother was eight years older than I. And, though we were brothers, we were quite different from each other. He was into sports; I wasn't. He was cool; I was a nerd. Having my brother take a bottle of pop from the fridge and invite me to walk with him down to the woods to share it was a significant moment for me as a seven-year-old boy. Fifty years later, that memory continues to speak to me about the potential we hold within ourselves to make the choice to come together, despite our differences.

All too often our human family chooses to live divided and distant from one another. We decide that togetherness is an impossible hope. We build ramparts and go to battle against one another rather than build bridges that can lead us to peaceful engagement rather than conflict.

That Coca-Cola advertisement had another verse: "I'd like to build the world a home and furnish it with love." Once in a while we need to pause and consider how we have furnished our homes and our hearts. When we look around the world and look within ourselves, do we find we have created places of welcome where others do not feel threatened by us but instead find us

approachable? If we find our lives furnished with prejudice, pride, intolerance, or divisiveness, perhaps it is time to consider a makeover.

In the Book of Leviticus, chapter 19, we read, “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:33-34). In the life that God has bestowed on us, we quickly discover that we do not occupy this world on our own; we share the gift of life with a variety of people. Some people are just like us. Many people are quite different from us. We walk the same path together, all of us striving to find our way forward and care for our families, seeking to pass on to the next generation a world more united by the bonds of Divine Love.

Yet, from ancient times to the present day we have continued to lose our way as a human family. We have chosen to clash and conflict with one another rather than seek the way of peace and understanding. We have fallen prey to the temptation toward selfishness and self-interest, when we could instead choose to share our world and be generous in the exchange of our gifts. My hope is that we might finally change our tune. Through God’s inspiration, perhaps we might sing a new song, choosing to extend a helping hand to others and become good companions on life’s journey. That harmony may only be a hope today, but with God’s grace we pray it may be brought to fulfillment.