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- *Differences of religions are manifestations of different needs of souls*
- *The future of the world depends on tolerance*
- *How prayer works*
- *Love those who are difficult*

God joins your souls together in a firm union. That union is a spiritual tie wherein each of your souls is able to respond to all others. Your souls respond to God, of course, but it is never often enough that your souls respond to other souls. Such a union is difficult to achieve in the normal activities of daily life. It is for this reason so important that all of you, for whatever reason, have chosen to be here at this moment in your lives.

The strength that you draw from God is not such a mystery. The strength that you draw from each other is frequently less understood. When you are in contact with the souls of those around you, you have the opportunity of learning first hand the meaning of love expressed and experienced through listening and sharing. In your discussions this evening, much was shared. Even more was experienced inwardly without sharing. But without your being together, the growth which has taken place would not have been possible.

The challenges which you are presented with you have responded to according to your own perspective which is in turn governed by where you are in your spiritual journey. It is important always to recognize that no two souls are completely at the same spot in their development. Each soul travels the route which is most appropriate. We urge you to consider the differences of religions as manifestations of different needs of souls. Of course there is no one religion which is better than another. Each approach is appropriate for that soul at that point in its development.

And so it is with societies. Societies are collections of countless souls united in some kind of social bond. The differences of those societies must be understood, of course, for one cannot go through life ignoring the reality that other views exist, other viewpoints are taken, other actions are committed.

It is to your benefit to become aware as much as possible of all that transpires. If you are to learn tolerance, you must be aware of an issue that requires it. Tolerance is not ignorance; tolerance is based on knowledge. Intolerance is based on ignorance. You should therefore be most concerned about learning of the beliefs, the directions of activity of other societies, be they governed by secular or sacred beliefs. The future of the world depends on such knowledge, not on ignorance. There is the well-known expression that a problem does not go away if you ignore it. An issue can only be resolved through understanding. Such understanding is the beginning of tolerance. With so much discussion of the need for tolerance, little has been said about what you

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can do to eliminate what you know to be wrong. Again we reiterate there is no place in life, in your lives, for violence. But how do you stop what you know is wrong?

First of course is prayer, but prayer must be the foundation for something else, and that is action. What is the nature of such action if it is to be appropriate to your perception of God? Certainly it has to be nonviolent, but it must also be predicated on the knowledge of which we spoke. If you view this issue on a more immediate level, in a local sense as it were, if you feel strongly that the actions or decisions of people locally are incorrect, you cannot approach them yelling and shaking your fist and telling them how stupid you feel they are, or selfish. That accomplishes nothing. If you oppose an issue, you must learn all you can about it, and with prayer focus your efforts so that you may deal with reason and logic and with a self assurance which is reflected externally through peace.

A leader with great strength reflects peace, not anger; a leader reflects composure, not panic. You must in the end deal with others with patience, with respect for the fact that their beliefs are founded upon their understanding, that to change that understanding, change their beliefs, you must deal with their perceptions. This is nonviolent, it is responsible, and it is dealing with others in a peaceful manner with love.

Much that concerns you in the world leaves you with a feeling of helplessness, that on a wider scene you have little influence. But that is not really the case. For any issue that concerns you, the first approach is prayer, not that the issue will go away, but that your response will be the right one, a response which is appropriate, which is reflective of God within you. That is what you pray for. It is the same whether you are concerned about issues or health. When one is sick one should not pray that the illness will just vanish. One should pray that one approaches the illness in the right way. The response is yours. The result may be a disappearance or an alleviation of an issue, but the initial response is yours.

Nonviolence, politically speaking, does not imply condoning what must not be. Each of you is empowered through prayer to respond. That response through prayer will be in accordance with God's design, with God's peace, with God's love. You see, you are not being asked to do nothing. On the contrary, you are being asked, you are being encouraged to become involved, as involved as your commitment takes you. It is through involvement, generated first through prayer, governed by peace, that progress is made. It is never achieved through isolation.

You will never be successful in altering a condition just by praying for such alteration. Prayer of course is essential. Its power greatly exceeds human understanding. But its power is not in convincing God to take some action. It is in focusing humankind to take action. God's power is in channeling humans into the appropriate direction. It is not for God to suddenly change the world. It is humankind who serves as God's hand. It is humankind that ultimately serves as God's conscience.

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It is in human form that God's form is manifest on Earth, not just as the result of some magical spiritual presence. *You* have to manifest love. *You* have to be patient. *You* have to be understanding. *You* have to be knowledgeable. *You* have to take action. *You* have to seek the proper direction. The impetus for all of that begins with God. The vehicle for achieving the insight necessary for all of that is prayer. Insight that you can have total faith in comes only through prayer. Therefore do not diminish the presence of prayer in your life, but recognize fully that what ultimately moves the world is the people. It is not just the spiritual presence of God.

Be involved. Be involved within your close circle of friends, in your community, and in a broader circle, recognizing that the direction of that involvement must come through prayer from God. Seek out those with whom you differ and find a way to love them. Seek out those who cause irritation or remorse, bitterness, anxiety, jealousy, and through prayer feel a union with their souls. That is the first step toward peace. It is a difficult first step, but absolutely essential.

We rejoice that you are together, that your souls are bonded at this moment, and that we are bonded with you. We pray for your continued growth. We will continue to challenge your understanding of life, beckoning you to stretch and expand and broaden your perception of God. We bless you now with God's strength, peace, and love.

Amen.