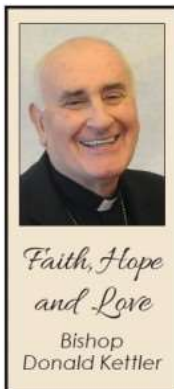

Strong ecumenical, interfaith relationships foster peace, unity



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I recently released a statement marking one year since the stabbings at Crossroads Center in Waite Park on Sept. 17, 2016. I want to share what I said with you:



Jesus tells us: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you." It is a simple command, instructing us to treat all people with the care, dignity and respect they deserve as children of God. At the same time, it is a very challenging command, especially if we fear our neighbors because we don't know much about them, or because our perceptions of them are rooted in negative stereotypes, or because something happens that fractures our sense of community.

One year ago, our community was in need of healing following the violent actions of an individual at Crossroads Center. I want to again offer my prayers for the victims who were injured that day and for the emergency responders who came to their aid. Nothing justifies such violence, and I hope that all who were affected by the incident have been able to find healing and peace.

Our local community was in need of healing, too. Over the last year, I'm thankful that so many of our area leaders have continued to work for peace and unity among the diversity of cultures and faith traditions that call Central Minnesota home.

The Greater St. Cloud Area Faith Leaders group, of which I am a member, has accomplished a great deal in the last year. This group of Christian, Muslim and other religious leaders, continues to meet monthly to discuss ways of supporting and learning from one another — meetings that first started more than two and a half years ago. We recently held our third annual summer picnic, inviting members of our respective faith communities to share food and conversation. And we have sponsored “circles of understanding” in which people can share their personal stories and listen and learn from each other.

In all of these efforts, no one seeks to convert others or impose their beliefs. We are simply getting to know one another better, extending hospitality, building trust and even becoming friends. When we do that, honoring Jesus’ commands to “do to others whatever you would have them do to you” and “love your neighbor as yourself” become easier — and our civic and faith communities become stronger and more united as a result.

Pope Francis in his document “The Joy of the Gospel” encourages us to foster strong communities and answer the call to “encounter” others, especially those on the peripheries. Building strong ecumenical and interfaith relationships — especially personal relationships — is one important way of answering this call. I recommit myself to doing that, and I encourage our Catholic faithful and others of goodwill to do the same.

Sincerely,

+Donald J. Kettler
Bishop of Saint Cloud



Bishop Donald Kettler talks with a young man during the third annual Greater St. Cloud Area Faith Leaders picnic Aug. 20 at Lake George in St. Cloud.
(Dianne Towalski / The Visitor)



About Bishop Donald Kettler

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