

# KINDNESS

Eugene Hemrick writes, "If there is any one virtue that our culture needs at this time, it is kindness...and the quality of kindness that is especially needed is civility." As children, one of the first lessons we are taught is to *be nice*. We are taught to share, not to hit or call names, and to play fairly. Being nice is a good starting point, but kindness as a virtue calls us well beyond mere niceties. It calls us to focus more on the other person and less on ourselves. It can also place a heavy demand on us because of the character it requires. Kindness is not a weak virtue; instead it is one that can muster all of our strength in determining how we respond to those around us.

"If you stop to be kind, you must swerve often from your path.  
Most kindness interrupts our personal agendas." Mary Webb

There are many events or people in our everyday lives that call us to speak and act with kindness. Perhaps it is a co-worker who tries our patience, or an employer who does not appreciate all that we do. It might be someone whose opinions differ from ours, or who seems to have opposing values. It could be someone who has grown bitter with life, or who refuses to forgive. Responding with kindness can disarm anger and keep our dignity intact in what can often be hurtful or damaging situations.

Kindness, the type modeled by Christ in the Gospels, must be based on a love for God's people. As John Lily writes, "The eyes may be the windows to the soul, but the tongue is the ambassador of the heart." If we indeed see others as our brothers and sisters in Christ, if we indeed have that love for them inside our hearts, it will show itself in how we act and what we say.

"Kindness has converted more people than zeal, eloquence, or learning."  
Frederick Faber

"You can tell more about a person by what he says about others than you can by what others say about him."

For the next month we invite you to focus on kindness - to pray for the virtue for yourself, to thank God for the gift where it already appears, and to think of those persons you know who are examples of this virtue. Once you have identified these people, we encourage you to call them or write a note to them, telling them that you see the virtue of kindness in their lives. A few examples might be:

- Persons who are not envious or resentful of others, but applaud their successes and achievements.
- Those who say what someone needs to hear even if it isn't what they want to say.
- Parents who see past the results to the intent of their children; those who combine discipline with compassion.
- Someone who models integrity and strength of character in the face of adversity.
- Those who have an affirming word or a ready smile.
- Teachers who bring out the best in their students by fostering a strong self esteem.

## Prayer for the virtue of kindness:

Loving God, thank you for giving me the gift of your Son who has shown me the path to you. Your desire for my life is to continue to model His example, and so I ask for the virtue of kindness. Open my heart to your voice calling me to a greater awareness of and sensitivity to others. Help me to live a life of compassion and love. May I continue to see others as you see them, and to bring joy to their hearts by what I say and do. Remove from me any harshness or bitterness, any desire to punish or insult. Show me, instead, the gentleness and mercy you desire. May mine be the voice that welcomes, that consoles and encourages. Indeed may I be your voice to all who are in my life. Amen.