

June 22, 2016

Greetings:

When I was asked to write a letter to be read by someone 630 years in the future, I must confess I had a good laugh. I'm writing in a language called English – modern English, circa 2016. Now, the English language has been around for a long time, but 630 years ago I wouldn't have understood 99% of English as it was spoken and written, so I'm guessing this is going to elicit some head-scratching on your part.

I wonder if you have mastered the knotty problem of time travel. We haven't, of course. It's widely considered to be impossible on all but the most theoretical levels. But if I could travel back in time 630 years, I would land in the calamitous 14th century, a time of knights and brigands and sea battles and sieges and a disease known as the Black Death, which wiped out more than a third of the population from India to Iceland. I am guessing, probably wrongly, that India and Iceland still exist 630 years hence, or if not, are at least mentioned in some dusty old history book.

Assuming, of course, that there are still such things as books, or some sort of written tradition. One can't be sure – it's like trying to forecast the weather six months in advance. Of course, maybe weather forecasting is not part of your daily existence; maybe mankind has figured out how to manipulate it, or somehow made it irrelevant by enclosing entire land masses in a climate-controlled bubble.

Anyway, I hope you have solved some of the problems we wrestle with today, and that personal freedom and individual liberty are still the gold standards of human existence.

I hope that as you have conquered the diseases that keep our population in check you have figured out a way to keep the planet ecologically balanced and sustainable.

I hope that people still work for their living, because that's a good thing, and that none ever starve.

I hope the concept of family has survived, so that every child is nurtured, guided and loved.

I hope mankind has become kinder and more understanding and more respectful, and I hope there is no more war.

I hope that a belief in God has survived, too, because humanity needs to be reminded that our short lives have a purpose, and that every once in a while our moral compass needs re-calibrating.

And I hope you still have baseball.

Sincerely,



James S. Oddo
President, Borough of Staten Island

