

I saw a cartoon recently. It showed a group of high school students walking out of school. They were all dressed identically: baggy jeans, T-shirts, baseball caps on backwards, same style of tennis shoes.

As they're walking along, one of them says to the group: "I heard they're gonna make us wear uniforms next year."

Another complains: "That's not fair! I don't wanna dress like everybody else!"

Diversity: the fact or quality of being different. Many of us have a peculiar relationship with this concept.

In one way we are all for it: "I want to do my own thing! I have to express my individuality! I'm different from you and I'm okay and you're okay. . ."

But in another way, we mistrust diversity. "Diversity will destroy community! We have to do things alike or we will lose our sense of unity for in unity is our strength!"

The teens in the cartoon wanted diversity in dress, yet they all wore the same outfit. Sometimes we do something similar. We say we are all for diversity – yet we squelch any sign of it in ourselves and in others. . .

Why is that? Why can we be so intolerant of difference? For one thing, we may be afraid. Afraid of what? You name it – we're afraid of it: We're afraid of germs, wasps, snakes, lightening, strangers, heights, new ideas, the future, God, and even ourselves.

This innate fear causes us to do some strange things – for example to curb diversity. We reason the more diversity there is, the less we will know and understand. The less we know and understand, the less control we will have over our life. The less control we have over our lives – the more scary life is. And that, we think, is bad.

We can curb diversity in small ways. We can demand that everyone act in the same way. We can say things like: "We should all pray the same way. . . We should hold the same values. . . Or the ubiquitous: we've always done it this way!"

People who are intolerant of diversity usually assume that there is really only one right way of doing things – and of course the right way to do things, or to see things, or to understand things --- is MY way!

But diversity is not a threat. It is, in fact – a gift. It is, in fact – one of the outstanding characteristics of God's creation. All we have to do is to look around us.

For instance, when God thought "flower" – God did not just think merely of daisies and roses. God also thought: lilies, violets, geraniums, petunias, pansies, asters, zinnias, irises, and on it goes.

And when God was creating beasts of the earth, on the sixth day of creation according to Genesis – God did not stop at just dogs and cats. . . but continued on with horses, goats, whales, camels, giraffes, possums, and elephants. . .

And when God thought "people", God did not stop with just Adam and Eve – but continued on with Abraham, Noah, Sarah, Isaac, Moses, Judith, Ruth, David – and even us: who are white, brown, black, red, yellow – and everything in between.

One thing today's feast of the Holy Trinity teaches us is that at the very core of God's being – is diversity: there is Father who is creator --- there is Son who is redeemer – and there is Holy Spirit who is the advocate & motivator. **God is diversity.** The Three Persons are unique from each other. And we who have been fashioned in God's image, share in God's diversity. Diversity, like all of God's creation is essentially – Good.

Years ago, in the seminary at St. Vincent, the scripture scholar Father Demetrius Dumm taught us: "Diversity is not the enemy of unity. The enemy of unity is hatred – intolerance -- or simply the lack of appreciation for that which is different."

All of this having been said, we might ask ourselves these questions in the course of the day:
How welcoming am I of diversity whenever I encounter it – especially in other people?

Do I see diversity as something to be embraced – or something to be avoided?

Do I fear and resent what is different or unfamiliar – or do I see it as fascinating and challenging?

May we pray:

God, who is Father, Son, and Spirit – God who is diversity: help me appreciate and delight in what is different and unfamiliar.

Help me welcome the one who is different than me – who does things differently, see things differently, and understands things differently from me.

Help me not to be threatened by the people, places, and things that are different – but help me embrace them as a gift. AMEN!