

Catholic Identity is Inclusive

In the global village we live in, we face the challenge of seeking common ground and accepting difference. In *Christ at the Core* (2017), Reverend Professor N T Wright makes the connection between the Kingdom and our desire to pursue the benefits and blessings of ethnic and racial diversity.

Wright appreciates how hard it is to take a society like modern Britain [or in our case, modern Australia] and simply say 'okay you've got to do diversity'. Diversity takes time, but in the end, it is always the goal, because if it is not, you're saying 'we still like our cultural barriers and distinctiveness', which inhibits the cultivation of relationships between one another.

Wright in summarising Romans 14 explains:

Paul doesn't say some of you are Jews and some of you are Gentiles he says some of us only eat vegetables and some are quite happy to eat meat, some of us like to keep special days holy and others aren't too bothered about it. So, let's not judge one another, the aim is that with one heart and voice you glorify the one God.

An 'us versus them' mentality is a narrow and dangerous road to walk. When we start to believe we are better than others, we open ourselves to the possibility of overlooking our own flaws because we are focused on another's.

Pope Francis reminds us,

...instead of judging everything and everyone, let us be attentive to ourselves! Indeed, the risk is to be inflexible towards others and indulgent towards ourselves.

When we start to notice ourselves we become aware of how our own presence may impact on the places we go and the people we meet. We should not be travelling along a one-laned, narrow road, it should be more like a highway with bridges to cross, lanes to share and on ramps to enter so others can join us along the way.

"Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another" (Rom 14:13) as Paul instructs and instead practise love and leave the rest to God because "the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

It is necessary for us to walk together, without prejudice and fear. Pope Francis proposes:

The Holy Spirit enables us to embrace everyone, to build communion in diversity, to unify differences without imposing a depersonalised uniformity. In encountering the diversity... we have an opportunity to grow as Church and to enrich one another. All the baptised, wherever they find themselves, are by right members of both their local ecclesial community and the one Church, dwellers in one home and part of one family.



Reflection: How do you cultivate relationships and foster diversity in your ministry?

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.