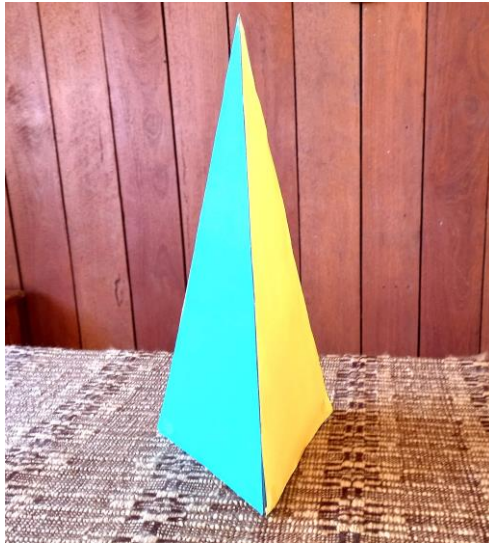


Equal and Different



Above is a three sided object that can symbolise something about people being equal and different. The sides are of equal size and shape but they face different directions and are different colours. The two sides visible are blue and yellow. The third side is purple. Each side has two edges connected to the other two sides, enabling the whole to stand upright. I have used this figure in the past to explain how God is Trinity; one God but three persons, designated as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To me it is not surprising that a Trinitarian God expressing love and difference in a unity, created all human beings equal as being made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), and also different from each other.

As human beings in this world, we have certain rights and freedoms. In Australia we try to support these basic human rights by our laws, but they are sometimes disregarded. Lately we have heard of women being violated, an elderly person with dementia ill-treated, children abused, and Aboriginal people demeaned by racist acts.

As Christians, our faith, which affirms equality and difference, should support and confirm the rights of all people in the world regardless of skin colour, nationality, culture, age, sexual orientation, gender, economic state, health, disability, education, etc.. If we turn to the Gospels, Jesus is seen as relating in respectful and caring ways to such people as a rejected Samaritan woman (John 4:7), a despised tax-collector (Luke 19:5) and banished children (Luke

18:16). Further, the risen Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, a woman (John 20:15), and later to Peter, who three times denied knowing him, but was forgiven and trusted with an important task (John 21:15). These acts demonstrate how we, followers of Jesus, are to behave towards others.

Although we are all humans, we are all unique, different from one another and changing. There are times when I wish my computer would not update and make changes forcing me to treat it in a different way. However, to continue to do my work well, I must be flexible and accepting, as we need to be in our relationships with one another if all involved are to grow and mature.

Difference and change is part of life in our world. In fact, all of God's creation that we know, including animals, plants, soils etc. are different from each other and in a constant state of change. But not all changes are good.

By themselves differences and changes are neither good nor bad. It is up to us to discern what is good and what is bad in life. Loving and caring for the wellbeing of others is the good we are to encourage, and hate is the bad we are to change. Wars, injustices, ignoring the suffering of others and bitter arguments are some of the ways we can harm and even destroy those who are different from ourselves. To recognise and foster the good that is present in others and ourselves often takes deliberate effort on our part.

Returning to the triangular figure on the front page of this leaflet, it witnesses to our limited vision. There is a purple side which we cannot see. We can fiercely deny it exists, or we can put aside our strong opinion, listen to someone in another place describing it as real, and accept the possibility. One day we may affirm this possibility as true, if we have changed our perspective even a little.

When we and another disagree, sometimes we are both right and we realise that our knowledge is very restricted and our world is more fascinating than we thought. We may even, as a result, learn to share and receive the love of God in new ways and places.

When Jesus, resting at a well in John 4, spoke to an outcast Samaritan woman whom he should have disregarded, his disciples were astonished. However, surprisingly, it led to many Samaritan people coming to Jesus and believing that

he was indeed the Saviour of the world.

When human rights, and in consequence relationships, have been damaged and violated by words and acts of individuals, groups or nations, it is up to Christians to forgive and/or to ask for forgiveness, work for justice, and be open to dialogue that can change all involved and the situations. It may concern the treatment of asylum seekers, racism, bullying, etc.. In such reconciling and healing acts, respectful loving friendships can develop.

We Christians believe in a God who is not only three persons in unity, but also a God of love whose love is able to love us equally, uniquely and differently. Whoever we are and wherever we are, we are all human beings loved by God, brothers and sisters deserving of respect.

As Christians, members of Christ's body, we are especially called to reveal God's compassionate love to all today. To live out such a vocation we have Jesus' example and the Holy Spirit to guide us. Also, if we are open, God will work through us and other people different from ourselves, to help all of us to share God's love, so, like the figure on the front of this leaflet, we can together stand upright in God's love.

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