

Harmonizing opposing differences

Pope Francis

*In keeping with the theme of this issue, we share three excerpts taken from various interventions by Pope Francis. The first is from the apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (no. 117), the second from his October 11, 2022 homily marking the 60th anniversary of the Vatican Council II and the third from Francis' recent conversation with editors of the American Jesuit magazine, "America Magazine"¹ (Vatican News, November 28, 2022).*

When properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the blessed Trinity where all things find their unity. He builds up the communion and harmony of the people of God. The same Spirit is that harmony, just as he is the bond of love between the Father and the Son.[93] It is he who brings forth a rich variety of gifts, while at the same time creating a unity which is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony. Evangelization joyfully acknowledges these varied treasures which the Holy Spirit pours out upon the Church.

The Council reminds us that the Church is a communion in the image of the Trinity (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 4.13). The devil, on the other hand, wants to sow the darnel of division. Let us not give in to his enticements or to the temptation of polarization. How often, in the wake of the Council, did Christians prefer to choose sides in the Church, not realizing that they were breaking their mother's heart! How many times did they prefer to cheer on their own party rather than being servants of all? To be progressive or conservative rather than being brothers and sisters? To be on the "right" or "left", rather than with Jesus? To present themselves as "guardians of the truth" or "pioneers of innovation" rather than seeing themselves as humble and grateful children of Holy Mother Church. That is not how the Lord wants us to be. All of us are children of God, all brothers and sisters in the Church, all of us making up the Church, all of us.

"Polarization is not Catholic. A Catholic cannot think either-or and reduce everything to polarization. The essence of what is Catholic is both-and". The Catholic unites the good and

¹ <https://www.americamagazine.org/>

the not-so-good. There is only one people of God. When there is polarization, a divisive mentality arises, which privileges some and leaves others behind. The Catholic always harmonizes differences. If we see how the Holy Spirit acts; it first causes disorder: Think of the morning of Pentecost, and the confusion and mess (lío) it created there, and then it brings about harmony. The Holy Spirit in the church does not reduce everything to just one value; rather, it harmonizes opposing differences.