

Why I Am Catholic

The call to unity.

Last Sunday the preface to the Sanctus (Holy, Holy) reminded us: "You gather them into your Church, to be one as you, Father, are one with your Son and the Holy Spirit. . . You make them the body of Christ and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit."

On Monday, the opening prayer for the memorial of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, a beatified Native American Indian, asked: "Through her intercession, may all peoples of every tribe, tongue, and nation, having been gathered into your Church, proclaim your greatness. . ."

Language is often cited as a barrier to unity, but Pope Benedict XVI in his 2006 visit to Vatican Radio said their work in more than 40 languages was: "to help build this great family that knows no frontiers, in which all are brothers and sisters in the multiplicity of cultures and languages and thus constitute a peace-making force." Every Sunday the Eucharist (*The Mass*) is celebrated in more than 100 languages all over the world; 11 or 12 in the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

"Through the centuries, in so many languages, cultures, peoples and nations, the Church has constantly confessed this one faith, received from the one Lord, transmitted by one Baptism, and grounded in the conviction that all people have only one God and Father." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 172)

Diversity does not have to lead to division. It's all in how we view it and our attitude toward differences. St. Paul reminds us: "Now the body (human body, church body) is not a single part, but many. . . The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I do not need you.' Indeed the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary. . ." (I Cor 12:14, 21-22) "So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another." (Rom 12:5)

I lived in Miami in the 1970s when the city transformed into an international city as people from all over the world came to live in one place. It was a difficult time with major growing pains. The city did not begin working together until after Hurricane Andrew (1992) devastated everyone. Then everyone pulled together and became one body.

Not only is everyone welcome in Jesus' House, everyone is needed. And when we pull together, great things happen that glorify God. "For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them." (Eph 2:10)