

# Diversity— Challenge and Gift



**THEME:** Diversity enriches our lives when we recognize and embrace the gifts it brings.

**ENVIRONMENT:** Arrange chairs in circle. Prepare a flower vase with one large blossom; have a variety of flowers available for use during the ritual— enough for one for each participant at closing.

## Introduction

**Leader** We are often told “Variety is the spice of life.” We live in a world and time when we are surrounded with variety, with diversity. To be diverse is to be “unlike in nature or qualities.” In the simple everyday act of shopping for our daily needs, we can be overwhelmed as we stand before the array of choices in one product we have come to purchase. We have come to expect and enjoy this wide variety in our lives. However, when we experience the diverse in our social, political, economic, and religious lives, this can be a challenge. In our time together today, we will share the challenge and the gift of this diversity.

## Readings

**Leader** Let us begin by listening to the poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, giving praise for variety in creation.

### Reader 1 *Pied Beauty*

Glory be to God for dappled things—

For skies of couple-colour as a  
brinded cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple  
upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls;  
finches’ wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced—  
fold, fallow, and plough;  
And all trades, their gear and  
tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare,  
strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled  
(who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour;  
adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty  
is past change:

Praise him.



**Leader** Hopkins has identified contrasts that touched his imagination and brought joy. What images spoke most to you? What other examples of “pied beauty” have you experienced?

(Allow time for sharing in the group.)

### Sing Refrain

We praise you, O God,  
for all your works are wonderful.  
We praise you, O God,  
forever is your love.

*Mike Balhoff, Damean Music*

(Add a flower to the vase.)

**Leader** We can share and delight in the gift of diversity in nature around us. Let us explore some of the diversity in other aspects of our lives.

We hear the comments of the **Dalai Lama** on religion and philosophy.

### Reader 2

I always believe  
that it is much better  
to have a variety of religions,  
a variety of philosophies,  
rather than one single  
religion or philosophy.

This is necessary  
because of the different  
mental dispositions  
of each human being.

Each religion has certain  
unique ideas or techniques,  
and learning about them  
can only enrich one’s own faith.

*his holiness the 14th dalai lama - 1981*

**Leader** What experiences have you had regarding religions and philos-

ophies other than your own? Have these been enriching, negative, challenging?

(Allow time for sharing in the group.)

### Sing Refrain

We praise you, O God,  
for all your works are wonderful.  
We praise you, O God,  
forever is your love.

(Add a flower to the vase.)

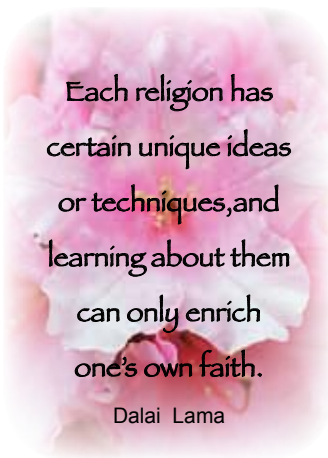
**Leader** Immigration to the USA has brought a diversity of peoples over the years. Attitudes and responses have varied especially in the area of the undocumented. We hear views expressed in an article from *National Catholic Reporter* (2/20/09).

**Reader 3** Mehlman said, “The idea that people come here illegally and then make demands is something that’s anathema to most law-abiding citizens.” Raids and a consistent crack-down on employers who hire illegal immigrants have been effective, causing a decline in the population of illegal immigrants in Georgia, Arizona, and Missouri, among other states, he said.

“We’d like to see a consistent pattern of enforcement that sends a clear message,” Mehlman said. “When you have rampant disregard of law, it is not beneficial to society.”

Others maintain that legalizing undocumented immigrants will ultimately benefit the economy, as workers are brought “out of the shadows,” pay all their taxes, and are more likely to be consumers.

**Leader** An enhancement or a detriment to society? How do you respond to the diversity of peoples, cultures in the USA society and in the world?



Dalai Lama

*(Allow time for sharing in the group.)*

### *Sing Refrain*

We praise you, O God,  
for all your works are wonderful.  
We praise you, O God,  
forever is your love.

*(Add a flower to the vase.)*

**Leader** Responses to differences, often in religions, have led to wars and persecutions. Listen to the words of **Rumi** from the 13th century.

### **Reader 4**

“... Move beyond any attachment to names.” Every war

and every conflict between human beings has happened because of some disagreement about

names. It’s such an unnecessary foolishness, because just beyond the arguing there’s a long

table of companionship, set and waiting for us to sit down.

What is praised is one,  
so the praise is one too,  
many jugs being poured

into a huge basin.

All religions, all this singing,  
one song.

The differences are just illusion and vanity. Sunlight looks slightly different

on this wall than it does on that wall and a lot different on this other one, but

it is still one light. We have borrowed these clothes, these time-and-space personalities,

from a light, and when we praise, we pour them back in.  
*mevlana jeraluddin rumi - 13th century*

**Leader** If we took these words seriously what conflicts in our world today could be resolved; avoided?

*(Allow time for sharing in the group.)*

### *Sing Refrain*

We praise you, O God,  
for all your works are wonderful.  
We praise you, O God,  
forever is your love.

*(Add a flower to the vase.)*

**Leader** What other areas of diversity have you experienced that have challenged you or been gift for you?

*(Allow time for sharing in the group.)*

### *Sing Refrain*

We praise you, O God,  
for all your works are wonderful.  
We praise you, O God,  
forever is your love.

*(Add a flower to the vase.)*

### **Closing Prayer**

For the expanding grandeur of Creation, worlds known and unknown, galaxies beyond galaxies, filling us with awe and challenging our imaginations:

*We give thanks this day.*

For this fragile planet earth, its times and tides, its sunsets and seasons:

*We give thanks this day.*



For the joy of human life, its wonders and surprises, its hopes and achievements:

*We give thanks this day.*

For our human community, our common past and future hope, our oneness transcending all separation, our capacity to work for peace and justice in the midst of hostility and oppression:

*We give thanks this day.*

For high hopes and noble causes, for faith without fanaticism, for understanding of views not shared:

*We give thanks this day.*

For all who have labored and suffered for a fairer world, who have lived so that others might live in dignity and freedom:

*We give thanks this day.*

For human liberty and sacred rites; for opportunities to change and grow, to affirm and choose:

*We give thanks this day.*

**(All)** We pray that we may live not by our fears but by our hopes, not by our words but by our deeds.

*we give thanks this day - o. eugene pickett*

*(Add the remaining flowers to the vase.)*

### **Closing Ritual**

Present a flower to each participant with the words, “ You are a precious gift of God’s creative hand. Go forth to celebrate the unique gift you bring to fulfill the wonder and beauty of all creation; varied and diverse from one loving Creator.”

### *Repeat Refrain*

We praise you, O God,  
for all your works are wonderful.  
We praise you, O God,  
forever is your love.

### **Acknowledgments**

Readings 2 and 4 and Closing Prayer: *World Prayers*.  
“Diversity—Challenge and Gift” by Marguerite Samz, OSM;  
from *Hill Connections* (<http://hillconnections.org>), a web site linking *Contemplation* and *Social Justice*.