

Opening Remarks to the Catholic Cultural Diversity Convocation  
University of Notre Dame  
5/6/10

My brother bishops and I are very familiar with the sweet, hearty aromas of tamales that go just right with a steaming sip of hot chocolate after singing mañanitas to the Guadalupana. We know gospel choirs saturating the Church with rousing rhythms and soulful songs carrying us to the bosom of Abraham. How our lips crave the taste of some luscious lechón after blessing a few hundred images of “el Santo Niño”. How much we enjoy a big bowl of Pho after being entranced by the soothing Vietnamese cadence of the rosary. We have smelled the scent of burning sage that wraps together a gathering of Native Americans. The gregarious festive dances of the Tongans, the stirring harmonies of the Samoans, make the feast of St. Peter Chanel one to remember. We are both honored and perplexed with the gracious gift of the Kola-Nut from the Igbo Catholics. Once we have one, what do we do with it?

These are just a sampling of the dizzy array of occasions where we are privileged to be. We are privileged to be with you, as fellow disciples. We are privileged to be for you, as shepherds. We pray that both with you and for you we can grow into the image of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

While those few examples of the festive moments of faith speak of the many cultures that relish the hope and joy of the gospel, our

purpose here in these days is not limited to just taste and smells, songs and rituals. The cultural roots of our communities go deep into the human soul, to the place where God's spirit breathes us into life. Our cultures begin there, where God gave us a name and sparked a restless desire to know His Name and seek His face.

As bishops, we are concerned about children and young people knowing the Lord Jesus and the teachings of His gospel. Will they savor and celebrate the Sacraments, especially the Sunday Eucharist? We worry about the health and welfare of our diverse families that come from all across the globe. We are determined to restore a social regard for the dignity of human person as well as foster solidarity for those most vulnerable in our society from the unborn to the immigrant, from the incarcerated to the war ravaged refugees. Will we have the pastors, teachers, catechists, musicians, social workers, and doctors sufficient to care for the whole Church and the Mission? Who will counter the cacophony of fear and suspicion in American discourse unless we let the Spirit of Pentecost take hold of our souls and tune our voices to the one call of the Good Shepherd?

These are the reasons why this gathering is so important. We cannot live the gospel to its fullest without engaging culture. We cannot engage the cultures of our plural society without working with you and your communities. We cannot do any of this without the

hearts and hands, minds and talents, vision and vitality of the whole Body of Christ. So we are here to dialogue with you, listen to your voice, hear your histories, and savor, together with you, the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. (cf. Eph. 3.18-21)

“Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Eph. 3.18-21)