



**A  
Brief Overview  
of  
Diversity**

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### *Author's Note:*

Informing ourselves about diversity and how to make a more hospitable space for all of the Children of God is a morally neutral activity. This will make us neither a good, nor a bad person. It will not suddenly make us “woke,” or “liberal,” or a socialist. It will not change our political identities. In taking the time to learn about the different people God created will help to make us better disciples of Jesus Christ, better equip us to “go out into the World and preach the Gospel.” (Mark 16:15)

The following document does make mention of same-sex individuals and talks about gender identity. Regarding same-sex attraction, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition. (CCC 2358)

Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection. (CCC 2359)

In 2019, the Vatican released a document regarding Gender Identity. The document calls for love and respect and rejects the idea that gender is separate from biological sex. You can read the document [here](#).

The opinions of this author are kept to a minimum in this e-book. In the areas where the author’s personal opinions manifest, the opinions are rooted in the Word of God and are faithful to the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

## Introduction

*“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (Revelation 7:9)*

For many of us, the idea of diversity is a fairly new concept. It was not part of our education growing up, and it wasn't even something talked about in casual situations! English is a living language and as such, we have new words and definitions that come into our vernacular frequently!

Part of keeping ourselves informed is taking the time to teach ourselves to learn something new, so thank you for investing in yourself, your school, your community, and (possibly?) your parish by becoming acquainted with the concepts of diversity, identity, power, privilege, microaggressions, bias, and communication

It's hard work and kind of uncomfortable to focus on diversity, but anything worth doing is going to require our best efforts and is worth giving our all. A more welcoming community can serve everyone well and position you as one whose mission others will want to share, however, only you can decide for yourself where to start.

Why is making sure everyone is represented so important? When we keep people from joining us at the table, by not having everyone's views, perspectives, and interests communicated, it can lead to invisible yet influential undercurrents or barriers in a group. When different people understand the problem differently there is more room for diverging priorities and agendas and increased solutions.

In taking the time to learn and expose ourselves to something new, we can help to establish trust across different groups. Lack of trust is, understandably, one of the challenges that surfaces, often very early in the work, especially when we engage in racial equity issues. Whether across color lines, across generations, or between groups from similar communities, lack of trust must be addressed when it becomes evident.

As St. Paul says in his letter to the Galatians, *“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”* This scripture does that mean that we are supposed to ignore our differences, but rather, we should make sure that we all feel like we are truly one in Christ Jesus. If our actions cause someone to feel less than welcome, are we treating them really like a member of the Body of Christ?

*“What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.” (1 Corinthians 14:26)*

+AMDG+

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## *From the USCCB:*

“The Catholic Church is a global faith with nearly 1.3 billion members. Less than 6 percent of the world’s Catholics live in the United States. There were few Catholics in the United States at its founding. Most Catholics in the United States can trace their ancestry to historical waves of immigration. In the 19th and much of the 20th century, these immigrants most often came from European countries. In the last 50 years, immigration from all over the world has brought growing racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity to parish life around the country. Nearly half of immigrants today are Catholic. Together, these diverse communities are worshipping in U.S. parishes in the 21st century.

Today, Catholics are arguably one of the most culturally diverse populations in the United States. In February 2013 The Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to estimate the size and distribution of Black or African American, Asian American or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian or Alaskan Native Catholic populations in the United States, as well as the locations of Catholic parishes known to serve these communities.

### *Why is understanding diversity important for us as Catholic Christians?*

Although Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander respondents were the most likely to identify themselves as active Catholics, these parishioners also report the least personal involvement in ministries or activities (81 percent are not involved in any). Black, African American, African, and Afro-Caribbean parishioners are the most likely to report personal involvement in ministries and activities (half are active in at least one).

Fifty-nine percent of non-Hispanic white parishioners are not involved in any ministries or activities other than Mass. As shown in the table on the next page, non-Hispanic white parishioners are also significantly less likely than others in culturally diverse parishes to say they are “very much” interested in a variety of parish programs, ministries, or activities.

The Catholic Church in the United States is one of the most culturally diverse institutions in the country and it will become even more diverse in the future. Parishes, schools and colleges, hospitals, charities, and other ministries need to adapt and prepare for this growing diversity. In the pews, many of those who are most comfortable with growing diversity are those who immigrated to the United States or are the children of foreign-born parents. Those who are descendants of older waves of immigration from Europe appear to be less comfortable and less willing to engage in parish life beyond attending Mass.”

## *Key Terms:*

**Diversity** refers to differences among people based on race, ethnicity, age, culture, religion, systems of thought and approaches, ability, experience, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status and other characteristics.

**Equity** is the fair treatment of all people, ensuring that everyone has access to the resources and opportunities that they need in order to thrive. Equity (as distinct from “equality,” or treating everyone the same way) recognizes that barriers have prevented the full participation of some groups, and strives both to eliminate those barriers and to address their effects, by increasing the fairness of policies and resource distributions within institutions and systems.

**Ally** is someone from an advantaged social group who recognizes their privilege, takes a stand against oppression, and takes steps to free themselves and their communities from oppressive attitudes and behaviors.

**Affinity Bias** is the unconscious tendency to get along with others who are LIKE us because it is easier to socialize and spend time with others who are not different. It requires more effort to bridge differences when diversity is present.

**Bias** is a predisposing judgment that may be favorable/unfavorable, conscious/unconscious, or explicit/implicit. Cultural competence is a set of behaviors, policies, and practices that enable people and organizations to engage

**Institutional oppression** is the systematic mistreatment of people based on their identity; it results when established policies, practices, and/or laws reflect, replicate, and produce inequities.

**Privilege** is the (usually implicit or unspoken) social, economic and/or other advantages that society confers upon members of a certain group

## *Activity 1: Who am I?*

We are all made up of different identities. Some identities are easy to see (race, gender) while others are internalized and not easy to see (disabilities, socioeconomic status, education.)

Instructions: Take out a sheet of paper. Write out your fullest name and write down your story. On the back of the paper, write the top three identities (age, gender, religion, race, socioeconomic status, ability, education, your family of origin, military experience, career, Myers-Briggs classification, Hogwarts House, etc.) that you hold dearest that you feel closest to.

Be creative! Write poetry, list your adjectives, include humor. Some questions to get you started:

- Who gave you your name? Why that name?
- Do you know the ethnic origin of your name?
- Do you have any nicknames? How did you get them?
- What is your preferred name?

When you are finished: Look back at your work. What did you learn about yourself? How does your identity influence you and your views today?

## *Activity 2: Diversity Inventory*

We are all influenced by our environment. The following chart will help us to better identify the diversity in our lives (past and present) and will help us to identify ways to improve our exposure to those who are not like us on a daily basis if this is a goal!

<b>In my environment</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Ability</b>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Religion (Christian/ Non-Christian)</b>
I am					
My co-workers are					
My supervisor is					
My elementary school was mostly					
My teachers were mostly					
Most of my close friends are					
My dentist is					
My doctor is					
The other people who live in my home are					
My neighbors are					
My church is					

### Activity 3: Diversity Statements

Instructions: Read each statement. Circle the letter in the row that best describes how often the statement is true for you. A= always, S= sometimes, N= Never

1	I acknowledge personal values, biases, assumptions, and stereotypes I might have learned while growing up and consciously try to control my assumptions about people.	A	S	N
2	I am aware of my own cultural identities and recognize how culture has impacted my personal interactions.	A	S	N
3	I can appreciate how diversity has benefited and enriched my life's experiences.	A	S	N
4	I am comfortable being with members of groups different from my own.	A	S	N
5	I am comfortable communicating about issues relating to diversity.	A	S	N
6	I "walk the talk" by demonstrating commitment and support for diversity and inclusion in my life — personal, professional, in my Church Community	A	S	N
7	I have goals related to diversity, inclusion and cultural competency for my life — personal, professional, in my Church Community	A	S	N
8	I recognize how bonding with my own group may exclude or be perceived as excluding others.	A	S	N
9	I work to make sure that people who are different from me are heard and are respected	A	S	N
10	I try to help others understand my differences.	A	S	N
11	I work willingly and cooperatively with people different from me.	A	S	N
12	Some of my friends are different from me in age, race, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation.	A	S	N
13	I regularly assess my strengths and weaknesses in the area of diversity, and I consciously try to improve myself.	A	S	N
14	I avoid stereotyping and generalizing about a person based on their group identity, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, and other diverse factors	A	S	N
15	I do not participate in insensitive comments or behaviors.	A	S	N



16	I intervene, in an appropriate manner, when I observe others engaging in behaviors that appear culturally insensitive or reflect prejudice.	A	S	N
17	I educate myself about the culture and experience of other races/religions/ethnic groups/ economic classes/sexual minorities/gender/disability groups by reading, attending classes/workshops/cultural events, interacting, etc.	A	S	N
18	I am open to changing my behavior and attitudes from ways that may be comfortable for me to ways that may be more inclusive.	A	S	N
19	I am comfortable in the presence of interracial couples.	A	S	N
20	I am comfortable in the presence of interfaith couples.	A	S	N
21	I believe it is important for children to grow up experiencing racial and ethnic diversity in their educational, recreational and social environments.	A	S	N
22	I believe children should be encouraged to make friends with others from a variety of racial, religious, and ethnic groups	A	S	N
23	I am comfortable in social settings that include a diverse group of people.	A	S	N
24	I include people different from me in social and informal networks and activities.	A	S	N
25	I recognize that others may stereotype me, and I try to overcome incorrect assumptions that they may make.	A	S	N
26	I recognize and avoid using language that reinforces stereotypes.	A	S	N
27	I disregard physical characteristics when interacting with others and when making decisions about competence or ability.	A	S	N
28	I resist the temptation to make another group the scapegoat when something goes wrong.	A	S	N
29	I refrain from repeating rumors that reinforce bias and/or prejudice.	A	S	N
30	I would be comfortable living in a neighborhood with people from diverse backgrounds.	A	S	N
31	I do not belong to and would not join any group or organization that is exclusionary in its membership.	A	S	N

**Questions: What did you learn about yourself in this activity?**

**Do you have areas of growth? Where?**

## *Developing Cross-Cultural Communication*

Cross-cultural communication refers to the ways in which people from different cultural backgrounds adjust to improve communication with one another.

In today's rapidly changing world, it's critical to gain an understanding of how cultural elements influence communication between individuals and groups in our communities. Developing strong cross-cultural communication skills is the first step in creating a successful environment that brings out the best of everyone there!

### *DO:*

- **Communicate respect:** Avoid the use of jargon, slang, and acronyms, which can be viewed as languages of their own. If these shortcut means of communication must be used, explain clearly what they mean and check that your message is understood.
- **Remember that women – though classified in a single group in the larger society – might come from different countries or cultures.** Women from all cultures also come from different backgrounds and socioeconomic groups: Don't assume that because a woman looks "different" that she is unfamiliar with the dominant culture. All women have the right to make mistakes and still be trusted and seen as competent.
- **Be aware of your body language.** Listen actively and make sure your nonverbal behavior reinforces your interest and respect, even if you disagree with the other individuals' perspectives. Observe the nonverbal behavior of others, but avoid making assumptions about it. Smiles do not always mean acceptance or understanding.
- **Be very careful with humor.** It is often misunderstood. Avoid making remarks that reinforce stereotypes, and never make racial, religious, ethnic, or homophobic jokes. If derogatory remarks are made in your presence, decide on the best course of action, and then take it. Silence may be viewed as condoning this behavior. You can simply state how you feel and why you find the comment or joke offensive or inappropriate without attacking the person or further escalating the situation.
- **Assume that other people know more about their own culture than you do.** Don't tell someone of a different culture from yours that you know how they feel when you don't.
- **Ask questions.** Diversity-related language is evolving. Preferences are very individual, and the ways in which people identify the groups to which they belong have changed and probably will continue to evolve. If you need to do so, it is okay to ask someone how he/she would like to be identified or addressed.

### *Don't*

- **Become defensive.** If you are challenged or if there is a breakdown in communication, try to find a way to make the interaction work or to end it respectfully.
- **Expect one person to speak for all people on every issue** – for example, one white woman cannot speak for all white women; one woman of color cannot speak for all women of color; one community member cannot speak for all people in a community.

- **Misinterpret passion for anger, or silence for lack of interest:** Understand that there may be cultural differences in expression. These differences must be respected and valued.
- **Pretend to be color-blind.** People want to be recognized for who they are. People often say they don't see color when what they really want to express is that they don't discriminate on the basis of color. The goal is not to be color-blind; it is the elimination of discrimination, and the valuing and inclusion of difference.
- **Assume that just because something is said politely that the content is not offensive**

### *If you make a mistake:*

- Make sure that you understand the nature of the mistake that you have made. Most people do not intend to offend and commit blunders due to carelessness or ignorance.
- Apologize and ensure that the other person realizes your sincerity. If appropriate, ask for help in how to avoid repeating the mistake.
- Do not become defensive. At one time or another we all inadvertently make mistakes in communicating. Treat mistakes and unfortunate situations as opportunities for learning.
- Relax and continue. There is life after error.

### *Unconscious Bias*

Unconscious Bias is an implicit association or attitude that:

- Is in favor or against one thing, person, or group compared with another
- It is automatic and operates beyond our conscious control and awareness
- Can be about a lot of things (e.g., race, gender, foreign accent, body type, etc.)
- Influences our decision-making about and behavior towards the target of the bias

Our biases are formed and reinforced by:

- Automatic Associations
- Colored Perceptions
- Stereotypes & Assumptions
  - Upbringing/Family
  - Nationality/Culture
  - Religion
  - Media

**Implicit preferences can lead people to act in a way that is at odds with their intentions or beliefs. They can influence how we evaluate and treat others.**

## Microaggressions

Microaggressions are brief and common daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental communications. Microaggressions can be intentional or unintentional and sometimes even well-meaning, however, they can communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial messages or assumptions to the receiver. The following chart shows examples of microaggressions in American society.

Theme	Microaggression	Message
<b>Alien in own land</b> When Asian Americans and Latino Americans are assumed to be foreign-born	“Where are you from?” “Where were you born?” “You speak good English.” A person asking an Asian American to teach them words in their native language	You are not American You are a foreigner
<b>Ascription of Intelligence</b> Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race.	“You are a credit to your race.” “You are so articulate.” Asking an Asian person to help with a Math or Science problem.	People of color are generally not as intelligent as Whites. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent. All Asians are intelligent and good in Math / Sciences.
<b>Color Blindness</b> Statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race	“When I look at you, I don’t see color.” “America is a melting pot.” “There is only one race, the human race.” “All lives matter.”	Denying a person of color’s racial / ethnic experiences. Assimilate / acculturate to the dominant culture. Denying the individual as a racial / cultural being
<b>Criminality – assumption of criminal status</b> A person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race.	A White man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a Black or Latino approaches or passes. A store owner following a customer of color around the store. A White person waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it.	You are a criminal. You are going to steal / You are poor / You do not belong / You are dangerous.
<b>Denial of individual racism</b> A statement made when Whites deny their racial biases	“I’m not a racist. I have several Black friends.” “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.”	I am immune to races because I have friends of color. Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. I can’t be a racist. I’m like you.
<b>Myth of meritocracy</b> Statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes	“I believe the most qualified person should get the job.” “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard	People of color are given extra unfair benefits because of their race. People of color are lazy and / or incompetent and need to work

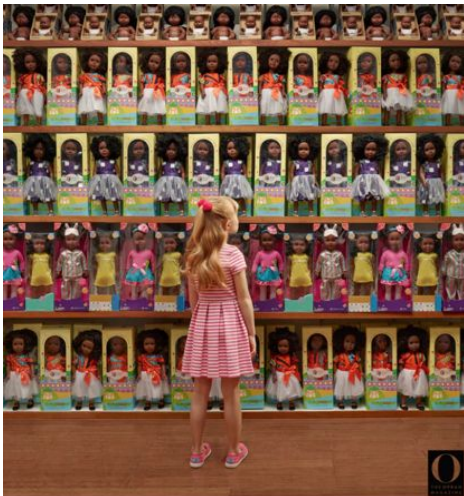
	enough.”	harder.
<p><b>Pathologizing cultural values / communication styles</b> The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant / White culture are ideal</p>	<p>Asking a Black person: “Why do you have to be so loud / animated? Just calm down.” “Can I touch your hair?” To an Asian or Latino person: Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal.” Speak up more.” Dismissing an individual who brings up race / culture in work / school setting.</p>	<p>Assimilate to dominant culture. Leave your cultural baggage outside.</p>
<p><b>Second-class citizen</b> Occurs when a White person is given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of color</p>	<p>Person of color mistaken for a service worker Having a taxi cab pass a person of color and pick up a White passenger Being ignored at a store counter as attention is given to the White customer behind you “You people ...”</p>	<p>People of color are servants to Whites. They couldn’t possibly occupy high-status positions. You are likely to cause trouble and / or travel to a dangerous neighborhood. Whites are more valued customers than people of color You don’t belong. You are a lesser being.</p>
<p><b>Environmental microaggressions</b> Macro-level microaggressions, which are more apparent on systemic and environmental levels</p>	<p>A college or university with buildings that are all names after White heterosexual upper class males Television shows and movies that feature predominantly White people, without representation of people of color Overcrowding of public schools in communities of color Overabundance of liquor stores in communities of color</p>	<p>You don’t belong / You won’t succeed here. There is only so far you can go. You are an outsider / You don’t exist. People of color don’t / shouldn’t value education. People of color are deviant.</p>
<p><b>How to offend without really trying</b></p>	<p>“Indian giver.” “That’s so gay.” “She welshed on the bet.” “I jewed him down.” “That’s so White of you.” “You people ...” “We got gyped.” Accents or Dialects “Not a bad job, for a woman.” • “You should smile more!” • “Don’t be so dramatic.” • “You should act more like a lady.” • “You are coming off too aggressive.”</p>	

## *Microaggressions in Action*

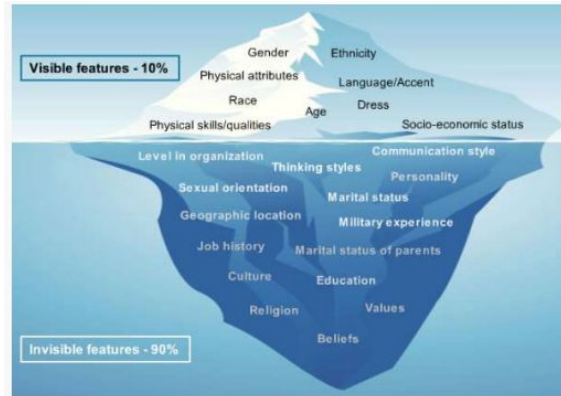
- Being interrupted or ignored in meetings.
- Leaving someone out of social gatherings or team/group activities.
- Acknowledging comments or making eye contact only with certain people.
- Pecking away at a smartphone while trying someone is to have an important conversation.
- Confusing the name of a person of a certain race/ethnicity with another person of the same race/ethnicity (or mispronouncing their name).
- Assuming women in the group will take notes

## *Activity 4: Flipping the Script*

The following photos flip the racial dynamics of American women. For each photo, spend some time studying each photo. On a separate sheet of paper, write down your initial thoughts for each photo. What dynamics are being reversed? What are your initial feelings for each photo? (and remember, no one is going to see this except God, who already knows your thoughts, so be as honest as you can be!)



## Personal Bias, Power, Privilege



The question is not whether I have biases; The question is what are my biases.

### What is Power?

- Power is the capacity to direct and/or influence the behavior of others or a course of events.
- There is power on multiple levels and power can breed oppression on multiple levels as well
- Power can be earned or unearned
- Unearned power can typically be traced to privilege.
- When power does not work for ALL, it breeds oppression.
- Institutional Power stems from societal/cultural norms and individual preference

Type of Power	How it manifests
Individual Power	In my Attitudes, Feelings, Belief
Interpersonal Power	In my Actions, Behaviors, Language
Institutional Power	Rules, Policies, Practices, Procedures of my community
Structural Power	Law, Governance, Historical Influence of my country
Societal/Cultural Power	The Truth, Right, Beauty, Normal of my culture



*Activity 5: Who’s got the Power?*

Who holds the power in some typical dyads? Take a look at the following chart. Decide which of the two (Group A or Group B) would hold more power. Then record to which Group YOU belong.

Group A	Group B	My Answer	To which Group do I belong?
Black, Indigenous, People of Color	White People		
Poor/Working Class	Middle Class/Owning Class		
People without Disabilities	People with Disabilities		
People under age 40	People aged 40+		
English-speaking	Non-English speaking		
People without College Degrees	People with College Degrees		
US Born	Immigrant		



## *What is Privilege?*

- A special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group.
- Unearned access to social power based on being part of a dominant group
- Invisible systems that give one group dominance over another
- It is an advantage that is out of your control and that you did not ask for
- It is hard to acknowledge your own privilege because it is the other side of oppression.
- Five Types of Privilege
  - White Privilege
  - Gender Privilege
  - Heterosexual Privilege
  - Socioeconomic Privilege
  - Religious Privilege

## *Examples of Privilege*

- Children of Alumni of a College or University being granted automatic acceptance over general applicants
- Being able to find makeup, nylons/pantyhose, band-aids that match your skin, or hair products for your hair type
- Automatic days off from work for religious holidays
- Seeing people “like me” represented in TV, film, books, magazines, and ads
- Having enough resources to be able to take on opportunities offered to you (unpaid internships, afterschool tutoring, test-prep classes)
- Not having to “come out” or having to hide your true identity from those who may harm you
- Career progression, pay differences, respect

## *Please remember!*

**Privilege is a morally neutral concept.** Is it not a concept designed to make people feel guilty or to diminish achievements. Understanding your personal privilege will help you to be able to decisively act, in large and small ways, to use your privilege to make systems fairer.

## Conclusion

As Catholic Christians, we are reminded of the two greatest commandments shared by Jesus: 1) to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength, and 2) to love our neighbors as ourselves. In learning about cultural differences and making sure that everyone feels welcome in our homes, schools, communities, and parishes, we can be sure that we are fulfilling both of those commandments. After all, we are each created in the image of God and we have Jesus dwelling within each of us.

In *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis writes: “You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations- these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit- immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.” Our neighbors are the people around us all of the time, whether we see them or not, whether we agree with their politics or not, whether they are rich or poor, black or white. When in doubt, err on the side of love. After all, a purity that demands exclusion isn’t real purity. Heaven is pure, good, true, and beautiful. God does not exclude anyone from his Love; exclusion is something that we choose for ourselves in our words and actions.

*“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?”*  
(James 2: 1-5)”

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