

Column Left - Los Cerritos Community News - May 13, 2005

OPINIONS & LETTERS

E Pluribus Unum – Out of Many, One

By Victor Manalo, Hubert H.
Humphrey Democrat Club

Over the past month or so, I've experienced some events that have spurred me to think about what unites us as people.

COLUMN LEFT

It started a couple of weeks ago when my wife and I were in Italy. Unable to speak much Italian, I noticed that my ears would perk up when I would hear someone speaking English. Being a foreigner reminded me how much a common language and culture unifies us. But, short of making sure that everyone in the whole world learns how to speak English, we need to find other ways to bring people together.

On our trip to Italy, my wife and I spent our time in Rome and we were fortunate to be in St. Peter's Square during the election of the Pope. We saw the white smoke rise from the chimney and heard the bells from the Basilica ring out. Just being in the Square gave me a sense of unity - Roman Catholics from around the world coming to pray for the Holy Spirit to assist the cardinals in electing the new pope. Receiving the first blessing from the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI, with thousands of pilgrims in silent reverence, revealed to me the power of unity. I know that religion can be a unifying force for people.

This past weekend my family joined in a procession to honor Our Lady of Fatima with hundreds of parishioners from Holy Family Catholic Church. As we processed from the church toward the Portuguese Hall, I saw children walking together carrying candles, young couples strolling hand in hand, and grandparents fawning over their grandchildren. This was another powerful, unifying experience for me - different types of people, all reciting the same prayers in different languages, Portuguese, Spanish, and English.

But how can we bring people together from diverse religious and faith traditions? I am not so naïve to think that what works for me will work for everyone else. The key, I believe, lies in understanding the difference between religion and spirituality.

In a survey that I read recently, people defined religion as the "practice of faith through worship or rituals" and spirituality as "belief in or connection with God." While I, as a Roman Catholic, practice my beliefs differently than my Buddhist neighbors, we share a belief in a God. We may not understand each other's religious practices, but, if we share a spirituality, I can help him to understand why I receive Holy Eucharist at Sunday Mass, and he can explain to me about his religious rituals. While we hold sacred our own unique religious practices that set us apart, together we are working to improve our understanding and relationship with our God - this is what unifies us.

This week, I am honored that I will participate in the Cerritos Prayer Breakfast. I understand that I will be there with a very diverse group of religious people. I pray that we will be able to demonstrate our unity, so that we may continue to bring peace to our community and our world.

Text of Article

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Victor Manalo, PhD.

Immediate Past President, Hubert Humphrey Democratic Club

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