

## October Food for Thought

### WE AND THEM

We put people in categories, the simplest is "WE" and "THEM"; you are either with me or you are against me; you are either like me or you are not like me. We tend to make the categorization quickly and use it to separate ourselves from others, be it based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender, national origin, religion, political views, locality, the school we attended, and a myriad of other categories that do not fit our Baptismal vows of loving our neighbors as ourselves and believing in the dignity of every person.

In the book many of us recently read, Disunity in Christ, the author, Christena Cleveland points out that we frequently differentiate ourselves even among our fellow Christians based on different practices and theology. She argues that if we (Christians) can get past this categorization and adopt a larger common goal, we will be more successful. I don't disagree with her; however, I find her discussion too narrow. I believe the challenge is to find broader goals that most of us value and agree with not just as Christians but as people. These goals should stretch reach across religious beliefs, race, sex, sexual orientation, and across other human categorization. These goals could include first class public schools for all of Richmond's children, equal access to and protection of the law, accessible and adequate health care, good nutrition, and clean drinking water for everyone to name just a few.

It is so very tempting and comforting to divide folks into those who are with us and those who are not. But we know that we are not monolithic human beings; some believe in the death penalty and some do not, some believe in a women's right to choose and some do not, some believe in very limited government and some believe in expanded government, some believe in gay marriage and some do not, and the list goes on. There is probably no one that has the exact same set of beliefs as you or me. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves and respect the dignity of every person, that means we are called to work to make this city, this state, this country, this world a better place for all our neighbors near and far.

So one might argue that the object is to find those overarching concepts that lend themselves to agreement and bring in as many diverse folks as possible to create an overwhelming "US" that can tip the balance to make those concepts become a reality. This is definitely a strategy that should be pursued.

More importantly, there is a second more specific strategy we all must pursue individually in our daily lives. As People of God, we have an overarching concept - every human being is made in God's image and likeness. We must look for those things that make us more alike not those that highlight our differences. Therefore, we must open our eyes and see God's image and likeness in every human being, then the "we" and "them" concept will fade like a misguided dream.