

Diversity and the Church

Eric Barreto is a newly hired professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, originally from Puerto Rico. He shared trying to fit in as an American in mainland America when his family moved.

The church seems incapable of responding to the changes around us. We aren't alone. Our country struggles with the same thing. Is it that we don't have proper leadership? No. Barack Obama is the "diversity president" and our country seems less accepting of diversity than ever before. The church tries to accept people according to the church's own criteria, not because of belonging as a child of God. Teenagers just want to belong (and so do quite a few adults!). In Ephesians 2:14-21, it suggests that we are all the same in church – all our differences go away. Church needs to share the gifts God gave us that make us different, and those differences need to bring us together.

Pentecost is an example of diversity gone right. The uneducated Galileans spoke in different languages and were culturally different than the multitudes they were speaking to. They, with the help of the Holy Spirit, began the church, not divided it.

What if that same Holy Spirit is so far ahead of the church that we don't even see it? What we are afraid of doing has already been made ready by God, right?

Our youth groups should be a place where a teen can be different AND belong. Our churches need to create a space where people can share their stories and celebrate who God has created. A true relationship is knowing each others' stories. God might just teach me through another person. I need, we as a church need, to be ready and open to learn through others different than ourselves.