

A Synodal Church

Laity, Pastors and Bishop of Rome Walking Together

Diversity not Uniformity



General Audience Vatican City, Jun 12, 2019

- An essential characteristic of Christian community is its unity in diversity, and the freedom this gives to Christians to come alive as witnesses of Christ.



Acts 15

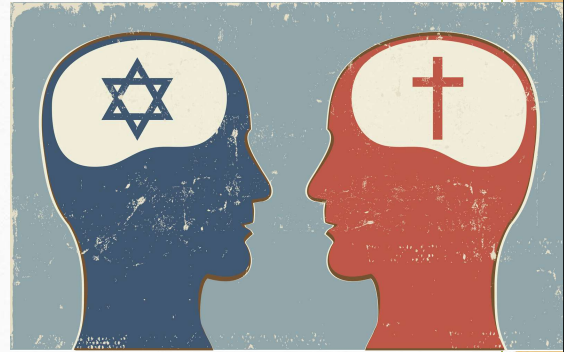
The Jerusalem Council

The Issue of the Jerusalem Council

Do Gentiles have to
No!
become Jews in order
to be saved?

That's Diversity

- Orthodox Jews who had generations of believing that they were God's chosen People, that salvation was limited to God's chosen people
- Gentile "sinners", Gentile "dogs" were now included in God's People. Salvation was theirs too and without first becoming Jews.
- Gentile "sinners" and orthodox Jews now were united as followers of Christ.



Priorities
changed
ahead



They reassessed the relationship
between faith in Christ
and observance of the Law of Moses.



Pentecost is celebration of unity in diversity, pope says 2017

- "In a way both creative and unexpected," the pope said, the Holy Spirit "generates diversity, for in every age he causes new and varied charisms to blossom. Then he brings about unity: he joins together, gathers and restores harmony."



Earlier in Acts of the Apostles

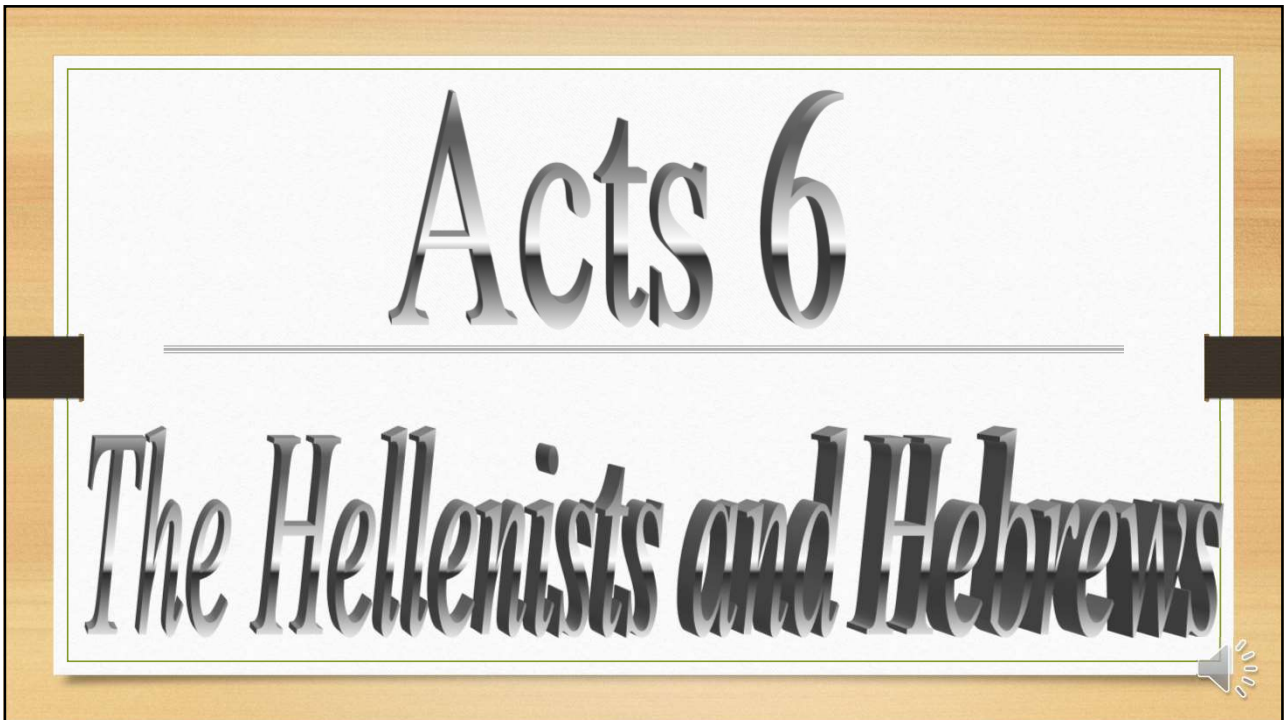
- Another example of diversity in action



The Early Church Acts 2

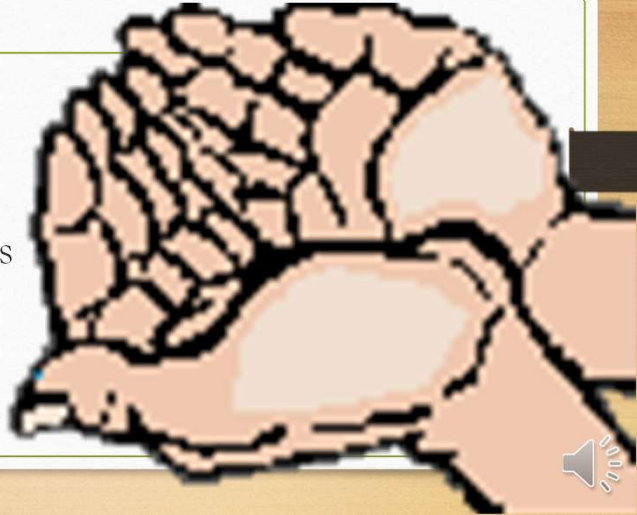
³³ With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵ They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.





The Hellenists and Hebrews

- Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.



The Hellenists and Hebrews

- Remember that all possessions were held in common
- Barnabas sold a field and gave money to the apostles
- No-one was in need
- Well the Hellenist widows were in need and neglected
- It appears to be the Hebrews who are at fault
- Luke hasn't told us anything about Hebrews or Hellenists up to now

The Hellenists and Hebrews

- ² And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said,
- “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables.
- ³ Therefore, friends, **select from among yourselves** seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task,
- ⁴ while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.”



The Hellenists and Hebrews

- ⁵ “What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.”
- NB These are all Greek names
- All chosen from the Hellenist Believers



The Apostles met with the community

They set the standards.

The local Church did the choosing.



The Hellenists and Hebrews

- ⁶ They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

Acts 6:1-7

St. Stephen Is Consecrated Deacon
Vittore Carpaccio, 1511



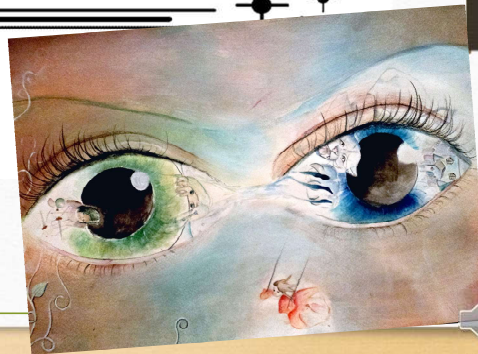
Harmony Restored

- ⁷The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.



Hellenist v Hebrews

***MORE THAN
MEETS
THE EYE***



Hellenist v Hebrews

- 6:1-7
- Both groups are Jewish
- Both groups are Believers
- Obviously two distinct groups NOW existed in Jerusalem within the early church
- Two culturally different groups

Hebrew Jewish Believers

- Aramaic/ Hebrew speaking
- Judean Culture
- Local - lived in Israel



ישראל

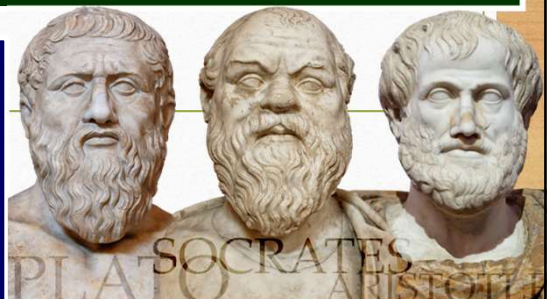


Hellenist Jewish Believers

- But we might want to ask is
- Who the Hellenists were?

Hellenist Jewish Believers

- Greek speaking ΕΛΛΑΣ
- Greek culture – art, philosophy
- May have come from the Diaspora (*scattered*)
- Jews living outside Israel





Hellenist Jewish Believers

- Jews in the Diaspora –scattered outside Israel (Egypt, Rome)
- Some maintained all the Jewish traditions strictly
- Kept Sabbath, food laws, dressed as they would in Israel
- Lived in “ghettos” – Jewish communities
- Reduced contact with Gentiles (non-Jews) as much as possible



Saul of Tarsus

A Diaspora Jew

- Not from Israel
- “⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; “ *Phil 3*
- “I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. “ *Gal 1*
- A Diaspora Jew who kept the whole Law



Hellenist Jewish Believers

- Other Jews mixed with the surrounding peoples
- Adopted customs of the country in which they lived
- Took part in the athletics, theatre, philosophical groups
- Still Jewish but not strict orthodox Jews.
- Wanted to assimilate with the local culture.

Hellenist Jewish Believers

- Hellenist Jewish Believers seem to belong to the second type
- Maybe born of Jewish parents in the Diaspora (outside Israel)
- Spoke Greek rather than Hebrew/ Aramaic
- Interested in things Greek – philosophy, athletics, Greek culture

Hellenist Jewish Believers vs. Hebrew Jewish Believers

- These differences were causing problems for the early church with the result that:
- The Hebrews seem to be resisting sharing the common goods/moneys with the Hellenist, especially the most vulnerable of the Hellenists – the widows.
- The Hebrews controlled the money/goods.

Hellenist Jewish Believers vs. Hebrew Jewish Believers

- More importantly there seem to be theological differences
- This becomes more clear as we read further on

Acts 7

Stephen's Sermon

The Sermon Itself

- A review of Jewish history from Abraham to Solomon and how Jesus fulfills the history

- Major points:

- The Jews had rejected Jesus like their fathers rejected the prophets – like Peter preached
- God is not confined to the Temple



The Temple in Jerusalem

- ⁴⁸ Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands; as the prophet says,
- ⁴⁹ 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.



The Temple in Jerusalem

- Many of the Diaspora Jews were not happy with the Temple
- They lived in Egypt, Rome, etc. but they were obliged to pay Temple tax for the upkeep of the Temple in Jerusalem
- Some went on pilgrimage there but many never saw the Temple and they resented paying for its upkeep
- Some Jews tried to build their own Temple in Alexandria so that they wouldn't have to go to Jerusalem but were stopped by the Jerusalem authorities

The Temple in Jerusalem

- BUT the Hebrew Believers in Christ were committed to the Temple.
- Earlier in Acts we read that they went to the Temple daily
- They were **orthodox Jews** as well as Believers in Christ.
- It seems likely that the root of the problem, which Luke describes as neglect of the Hellenist widows, is theological



Hellenist Jewish Believers vs. Hebrew Jewish Believers

- Basic dispute maybe also involved whether the followers of Christ have to be orthodox Jews, particularly with regard to the Temple.
- Hebrew say “YES” and go to the Temple daily, follow all the laws and religious observances specified by the Torah (the Books of the Law in the Old Testament)
- Hellenist say “NO” – “God does not live in a house made by men.”
- Dispute escalates and the Hebrew, who control the money (the common purse), seem to be taking it out on the Hellenist widows who are left in need.

Hellenist Jewish Believers vs. Hebrew Jewish Believers

- The Solution
- They delegate the administration of the money/goods for the Hellenists to the **seven Hellenists**.
- What they are doing is giving the Hellenist faction their own leaders/administrators
- They give the Hellenists control over their own goods/money
- They divide the common purse . It is no longer common to the whole community
- The Hellenists have their common money/goods

Hellenist Jewish Believers vs. Hebrew Jewish Believers

- NOTE
- This is not a separation/schism but an acceptance of the differences (cultural and theological) - it's pluralism/diversity
- Most important is that they maintain the “fellowship” (*kononia - onenes*).
- There is no schism.
- Both factions believe in Christ – both confess Jesus as Lord
- This belief overrides any other difference.
- They accept each others’ differences and are prepared to live with the differences because of their common belief in Jesus Christ

Hellenist Jewish Believers vs. Hebrew Jewish Believers

- This is an amazing decision!
- Belief in Jesus is more important than any differences over the practice of Judaism, even among the Jews.
- It's more important than sharing all things in common – the Hellenists are given their own resources

A hand holding a white marker is writing the words "WHAT IS YOUR PRIORITY" in large, black, hand-drawn capital letters on a whiteboard. A horizontal line is drawn under the word "PRIORITY". The whiteboard is mounted on a wooden frame with black corner tabs. A small speaker icon is visible in the bottom right corner of the frame.

WHAT IS YOUR
PRIORITY

Unity not Uniformity

- “Unity does not imply uniformity; it does not necessarily mean doing everything together or thinking in the same way.
- Nor does it signify a loss of identity.
- Unity in diversity is actually the opposite: it involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one and the placing of these gifts at the service of all members of the Church.
- It means knowing how to listen, to accept differences, and having the freedom to think differently and express oneself with complete respect towards the other who is my brother or sister. Do not be afraid of differences!”

• — Pope Francis, Address to Catholic Fraternity of the Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowship, Oct. 31, 2014

Diversity in the 21st Century

The Joy of Love

- Pope Francis's response to the Synod on the Family.
- “Each country or region...can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs” (AL 3).

AMORIS LÆTITIA



THE JOY OF LOVE
POPE FRANCIS

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION ON LOVE IN THE FAMILY

The Joy of Love

- ***Divorced and remarried Catholics need to be more fully integrated into the church***
- Because of mitigating factors, it is possible that in an objective situation of sin – which may not be subjectively culpable, or fully such –
- a person can be living in God's grace, can love and can also grow in the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church's help to this end. (AL 105)



- The Church is always “called to be the house of the Father... so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door” EG 47



Pope Francis

Amoris Laetitia –the Joy of Love

- “I understand those who prefer a more **rigorous** pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion.
- But I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness,
- a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, ‘always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street’” (#308).



Evangelii Gaudium The Joy of the Gospel 47



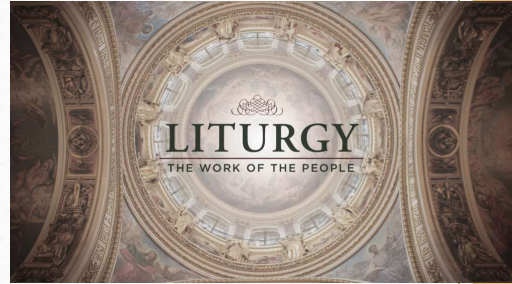
The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.

— Pope Francis —

AZ QUOTES

Magnum Principium 2017

- §3. It pertains to the Conferences of Bishops to faithfully prepare versions of the liturgical books in vernacular languages, suitably accommodated within defined limits, and to approve and publish the liturgical books for the regions for which they are responsible after the confirmation of the Apostolic See.



Synod of the Amazon



Pope Francis apologizes that Amazon synod 'Pachamama' was thrown into Tiber River

Catholic News Agency 25 October, 2019

As bishop of this diocese," Pope Francis, who is Bishop of Rome, said, "I ask forgiveness from those who have been offended by this gesture."



Diversity?

- A special liturgical rite for the Amazon region.
 - not just a difference in language or a difference in translation but a different rite?

- **Amazonian Rite**

82. The Second Vatican Council called for this effort to inculturate the liturgy among indigenous peoples; over fifty years have passed and we still have far to go along these lines. (QA)



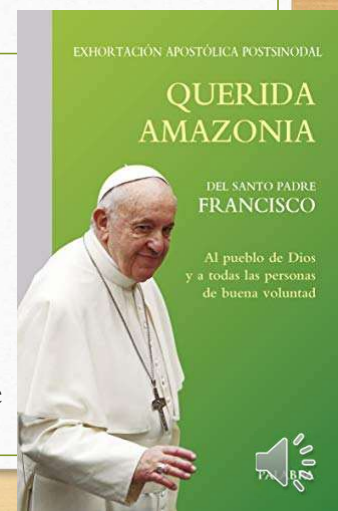
Synod of the Amazon Final Document prepared and each section voted on by the voting members

- **Ordination of Married Men in the Amazon**

- 111. Considering that legitimate diversity does not harm the communion and unity of the Church, but expresses and serves it (LG 13; SO 6) ... we proposed to establish criteria and dispositions on the part of the competent authority, ...to ordain priests suitable and esteemed men of the community, who have had a fruitful permanent diaconate and receive and adequate formation for the priesthood, ...to sustain the life of the Christian community through the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments in the most remote areas of the Amazon region.

Querida Amazonia Beloved Amazon

- 3. At the same time, I would like to officially present the Final Document, which sets forth the conclusions of the Synod, which profited from the participation of many people who know better than myself or the Roman Curia the problems and issues of the Amazon region, since they live there, they experience its suffering and they love it passionately. I have preferred not to cite the Final Document in this Exhortation, because I would encourage everyone to read it in full.



The Post-Pandemic Church

- “A tension between disorder and harmony: this is the Church that must come out of the crisis.
- We have to learn to live in a Church that exists in the tension between harmony and disorder provoked by the Holy Spirit.
- If you ask me which book of theology can best help you understand this, it would be the Acts of the Apostles.
- There you will see how the Holy Spirit de-institutionalises what is no longer of use, and institutionalises the future of the Church.
- That is the Church that needs to come out of the crisis.”



Holy Spirit de-institutionalises what is no longer of use, and institutionalises the future of the Church.



**YOUR
PRIORITIES**



***The Holy Spirit
loves to shape
unity from the
most beautiful
and harmonious
diversity.
May 31, 2019***

