



# International Solidarity Reflection

Cultural Diversity

*Shalom*

School Sisters of Notre Dame

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## **Introduction**

Cultural diversity brings us into each other's world. Cultural humility recognizes our barriers to full intercultural understanding. Cultural diversity notes our differences and knows another culture intellectually. Cultural humility situates us to acknowledge our limitations from our own cultural perspectives, colored by assumptions and prejudices, in relating to people of another culture. Though we are all shaped by our own culture, we move out of the cultural framework we are familiar with into the world of the people we care for, live with, and serve.

## ***Call to Prayer***

*Diverse in culture, nation, race,  
We come together by your grace.  
God, let us be a meeting ground  
Where hope and healing love are found.*

*When chasms widen, storms arise,  
O, Holy Spirit, make us wise.  
Let our resolve, like steel, be strong  
To stand with those who suffer wrong.*

*God, let us be a bridge of care  
Connecting people everywhere.  
Help us confront all fear and hate  
And lust for power that separate.*

*God, let us be a table spread  
With gifts of love and broken bread,  
Where all find welcome, grace attends,  
And enemies arise as friends.*

(“Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race:”text by Ruth Duck © 1992, GIA Publications, Inc.)

## **Experience**

Shaking hands is common in many cultures throughout the world. Reflect on this simple gesture in your culture.

In many countries in Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, shaking hands is the most common greeting. Shaking hands is repeated to the same people throughout the day as a sign of connection, respect, and friendship. The handshake itself usually contains three shakes in one. There are certain mores about shaking hands with the opposite sex.

In Asian countries, shaking hands may be limited to business partners. A simple bow may fulfill the intended welcome and respect.

In North America, shaking hands is used as a means of introduction and may be repeated before the goodbye. It is not so customary to shake your colleagues' hands unless you have not seen them for awhile. It is also used to congratulate someone on a job well done.

In some places in Europe, shaking hands is usually between men. Women may greet each other with a simple smile.

In Central and South America, shaking hands varies from urban to rural areas. The gesture can be used as a greeting and as a form of congratulations.

Knowing the customs is not the same as feeling comfortable with them. It may take time to understand how others use common gestures and the meanings these represent. We may feel uncomfortable, find the expressions strange, and struggle to keep from insisting that our way is the best way.

### Reflection

“In working with peoples of other cultures, we exercise care not to impose our own cultural values and traditions.” (*You Are Sent*, GD 33c)

“Your example of living together in peace across tribal and racial lines can be a powerful witness to others.” (Message of the Bishops of Africa to the People of God, Second African Synod of Bishops, 2009)

“Humility involves one's general attitude to one's place in the world and whether one feels subject to the same moral constraints as others. Unfortunately, the world is characterized by actions that reflect a value system where some lives are considered infinitely more valuable than others. In global settings, humility is crucial and helps undermine neo-colonial trends that often permeate relationships between the North and South.” (Levi, Amy. “The Ethics of Nursing Student International Clinical Experiences” *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing*. Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 94-99 (2009).)

### Action

Consider and discuss the following:

- *Where in our communities and ministries do we invite both cultural diversity and cultural humility?*
- *What outcome do we hope for when we admit our differences and seek to understand rather than change the other person?*
- *Which values and actions can enliven cultural humility?*
- *What in the words of the song “Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race” can we awaken within ourselves?*
- *What are ways celebrations can help us appreciate our sisters’ contributions?*

### Closing Prayer

God and loving Parent of every nation and culture and peoples of the world, we give to you what ever the moment brings. You created us as diverse destined to forever work for the unity, which you desire for us. Give us the wisdom and insight as School Sisters of Notre Dame to bridge the gaps and chasms with humility and care. God, let us be a table spread with gifts of love and broken bread, where all find welcome, grace attends, and enemies arise as friends. Amen