

Diversity Sept 13, 2026
Season of Creation #2

Rev Jack Fles
All Saints Skowhegan

The Beauty and the “Thisness” of Creation

Welcome: We are the body of Christ I Cor 12

- Favorite NT story from youth - all working together, w unique gifts
- We need each other
 - “I can do all thing thru Christ who strengthens me”
 - “God’s strength made perfect in human weakness”
 - Jesus tells us to love one another - all we have to do is ask for help

I. Haecceity:

I remember high school Biology, each pair of students were given a leaf and a microscope. The assignment: List everything you see. He who has the longest list, wins!

It is in the particulars, the details, the “thisness” of that leaf under the microscope that causes wonder and appreciation of the complexity of a simple leaf.

The 13th-century theologian John Duns Scotus had a specific philosophical word for this. He called it haecceity—the ‘thisness’ of a thing.

Haecceity is an uncommon word, not found in every English dictionary. Based in the latin root, haec = “This”

Not in Merriam Webster Collegiate addition, it is in the MW unabridged version. Important word for college students to understand.

Scotus argued that God does not create generic templates. God does not just create ‘birds’; God creates this specific, iridescent, unrepeatable creature. The hummingbird.

And more than that, God created them in an intricate, co-evolutionary dance with flowers. Some hummingbirds have bills curved so precisely that they can only pollinate one specific species of orchid in the entire rainforest.

This is the divine genius: God's ultimate perfection is not found in uniformity. It is found in specific, spectacular diversity.

And yet, when it comes to the vast, beautiful spectrum of human identity—including our gay, lesbian, and transgender siblings—we often panic.

We try to force God's magnificent, multi-colored prism into a rigid, black-and-white box.

But nature, scripture, and the very breath of the Creator tell a different story. Today, we are going to look at how diversity isn't a mistake to be corrected—it is the majestic creative force of life itself."

The diversity of nature spreads before us like the stars of heaven. What about the cosmos, how far does it stretch, and what secrets does it hold.

But let us take an up close, discerning look. What makes each thing unique, unlike any other?

II. Humming birds

One of my favorites is the hummingbird. Not too long ago I visited one of our parishioners; her garden was alive with hummingbirds. On the way home I purchased two red feeders.

Hummingbirds got their name for their humming wings. Those wings beat about 70 times per second when cruising and more than 200 times while diving.

Like Peter Pan, hummingbirds can fly forward, backward, and even upside down. They're the only vertebrates capable of sustained hovering.

They are colorful: the colors we see are not pigments, but tiny microscopic prisms in their feathers that refract light, creating iridescent effects.

The prism acts as a revealer of hidden truth. In everyday life, we often perceive the world in monolithic terms—much like seeing light as merely "clear" or "white."

The prism proves that what looks simple or uniform on the surface is actually composed of vast, intricate diversity underneath.

In the spectrum, no single color is superior to another; each frequency is required to recreate the wholeness of pure light. This teaches us that the diversity of creation—whether in nature, culture, or thought—is not a fragmentation of reality, but the full expression of its beauty.

Back to hummingbirds:

They eat all day long. must eat once every 10 to 15 minutes.

If the average man had the metabolism of a hummingbird, he would have to eat 285 pounds of meat every day to maintain his weight.

"If you ever want to see the wild, uninhibited imagination of God, you only have to look at a hummingbird."

And I was so happy when one hummingbird began to visit our feeders several times a day.. Gone now, migrating south for the winter.

III. Classification of Diff things

Who Started Formal Classification?

Aristotle (384–322 BCE): The Greek philosopher Aristotle is credited with the earliest formal and recorded attempt to classify living things. He divided life into plants and animals.

Following Aristotle, many medieval philosophers argued that things were defined by their "common nature" (what makes all humans human, or all hummingbirds hummingbirds).

These early ones taught that individual differences were just accidental variations of matter.

Scotus, was a disciple of Brother Sun Sister Moon, St Francis. Francis was a lover and keen observer of the birds of the air. He argued that God does not create generic broad categories of creatures, God creates specific individuals. As Jesus said, "the very hairs on your head are numbered."

Haecceity - THISNESS - is the unique, unrepeatable core that makes a specific object or person distinct from everything else in the universe.

Example Sentence "The artist tried to capture the unique haecceity of the old oak tree in her painting, rather than just drawing a generic tree."

"Thisness" is the crowning touch of God's creation. It is the ultimate reality of a being. A ruby-throated hummingbird isn't just an instance of the "bird" category; its specific, unrepeatable "thisness" is a deliberate, direct thought of God

If God's creative peak is the production of *individual uniqueness*, then forcing everyone into a rigid, homogenous binary actually works against the divine imagination.

So What is Going on in Christian America?:

Because Scotus argued that every single person, culture, and object has an irreplaceable, unrepeatable dignity given directly by God, his work is highly influential in modern American politics and theology.

Some view diversity as a fragmentation of unity.

But is it not true that unity requires diversity?

In a diverse society (like America) might we not be a "magnificent symphony of unique voices," where each individual's "thisness" must be honored.

This becomes a political question in a diverse society.

It's Not so Easy among Christians

The traditional perspective: This is how I was raised:

Conservative theology and Biblical literacy relies on Genesis 1 and 2 to establish a strict, dualistic order—male and female, light and dark, land and sea.

In this view, faithfulness to God is found in maintaining these distinct boundaries. Blurring or crossing them, especially in issues of human sexuality, is viewed as a disruption of God's intentional design.

But time and experience has helped me to see that view by showing that God rarely creates in strict binaries; God creates in spectrums.

Beyond the Dualism - beyond light and dark, there is gray, and it is expressed in how we use our words and read Scripture.

Genesis says God created the "day and the night," yet we have dawn and dusk.

It says God created the "dry land and the sea," yet we have marshes, estuaries, and beaches.

If God's physical creation is full of fluid transitions and spectrums, why would human creation be any different?

While mystic theology views diversity as an inherent, ongoing good, traditional theology often views sexual non-conformity as a reflection of the "Fall"—the brokenness introduced by sin. Therefore, they see these identities as something to be redeemed *out of*, rather than celebrated. "You can be cured", some say.

A monochrome universe would fail to reflect the infinite nature of God. True spiritual maturity, for Rohr, is moving away from the need to exclude others in order to feel secure, and instead moving toward a contemplative mindset that mirrors God's radical inclusion.

Diversity Generates Life: In biology, monocultures die.

Ecosystems require immense diversity to survive, adapt, and flourish.

Diversity is not a chaotic accident;

is God's primary mechanism for systemic resilience and beauty.

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As we deal with these issues, I will close with the words from Native American +Bishop Steven Charleston.

He is a member of the Choctaw Nation, priest in Navaho land and former Bishop of Alaska.

Finding Hope in Uncertain Times: You Are a Blessing

Would you believe me if I told you everything will be alright?

I won't be offended if you are not sure.

The way the world is today, it is hard to be hopeful.

But I will share one small thought to tuck away in the back of your mind:
you are a blessing.

In the life of someone else, you are a living blessing.

And as long as you are, as long as you care, as long as you love,
everything will be alright, no matter what happens.

Amen.