Sunday, October 3, 1976
NO EAST OR WEST
Galatians 3:26-29

In the whole mysterious gift of life, often what most astonishes and excites is diversity. No two human beings are the same. The tiniest snowflake, the most distant star, the intricately veined leaf of a tree are each unique. From jack rabbit to giraffe, from crocodile to swan, from tiger to hummingbird, nature delights in varieties of form and substance. There are no duplicates in creation.

One of the most beautiful sights I've seen was a choir composed of persons from almost every nation on earth. Each choir member was dressed in his or her native costume. It was a variety of colors of skin, of types of dress, of colors of material, of size of people. Tall people, short people; stout people, thin people; old people, young people; long hair, short hair; round faces, slim faces; a beautiful sight. There is a beauty in diversity and difference. God has made each one of us unique and it would be a dull world without this variety.

There is also a beauty in the many languages and sounds which human beings use. Have you ever stood on a street corner in a major city where you could hear four or five different languages at once? It's a wonderful babbling sound. Or visit the United Nations and put on the earphones in the General Assembly Hall and you can dial any one of five languages and hear the speaker in that language. I wouldn't want to live in a world of complete sameness. Would you?

Yet there is also a danger in diversity if one race or group of people begin to believe or teach that as a group, they are better than another grouping. Suppose all the tall thin persons would form a nation and come to believe that they were better than all the shorter stout persons. Or suppose all the long hairs should form a group and persecute those with short hair or put them into slavery. Or suppose all those who were bald would get together and not allow persons with hair on the top of their head to live in their neighborhood?

In other words, the danger in diversity is present when people with certain similarities get together to exclude others simply because they are different.

Furthermore, in spite of diversity and variety, there are still a lot of things we have in common. We all live on the same earth. We are the product of the same Creator. We need food to eat to live and one day we all come to the same end. We die! And we die equal. As the old cliche puts it, "You can't take it with you!" Rich person, poor person, bronze casket, wooden box, our bodies decay in the same way. Weeping and laughing, pain and joy, are also common to all of us.

So today as we gather with Christians around the world at the Lord's Table, at the same time that we are aware of the beauty and importance of our diversity and differences, we · also acknowledge our unity as human beings. One earth, one God, no matter what name we use to speak of that Creator. This world will one day become a peaceful world, only when all people everywhere come to realize that in spite of our exquisite differences, we at the same time hold many things in common. This is wh.t the Apostle Paul was speaking of when we wrote — "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

This is what world communion speaks of this morning. Whether people are in a great cathedral with its crowds and rich vestments and liturgy, or in a neighborhood house church around the dining room table; the white meetinghouse on a hill, the ghetto chapel, grimy outside, but gleaming inside, the South Pacific congregation with multicolored cloths and face; the glorious singing churches of south Africa , the Bible waving Baptists of Moscow, the weary soldiers whose table is the hood of a jeep, and all the rest, including you and me — our Lord says to us-- Take, eat, and we do so together.

Even in a time when the world is divided in many ways, we profess today that in Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north, but one great fellowship of human beings throughout the whole wide earth.

So today we come to the Lord's Table with a vision of the kind of world God wants it to be — a world of peace which celebrates our diversity and differences; yet at the same time a world in which we realize that we are all brothers and sisters eating at the Lord's Table. Amen.