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## Differences

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## Differences

Shall we have a green tree with colored lights and a variety of ornaments, or a white tree with all blue lights and only red ornaments? No matter which of the different options is selected, we all will be able to enjoy the Christmas tree when the work has been completed – if we know how to deal positively with differences.

Far from being clones, we have among us a great diversity of habits, customs, interests, and preferences. If God had made us so that would we all think alike, and all have the same preferences, we would be incapable of love. When we agree to abide by a decision, even about the decorations in a shared space, we express the higher value we place on persons rather than on the décor. Love is far more about relating in a context of differences than similarities.

People can argue over anything from the relative merits of fruit cake to brands of dish-washing soap, each seeking agreement with his or her position, neither gaining anything from the dispute. Between the extremes of avoiding all conflict over differences and never accepting any but one's own opinion, we can either agree to disagree, or we can seek for a decision that is respectful of both sides, even if one position must be chosen over another for the sake of our relationship. We are of much greater importance than the music we favor, the forms of recreation we prefer, or the kinds of clothing we like.

Some of the differences we have are of more significance than mere likes and dislikes. Focusing on what we have in common, when we have differing beliefs or values, is more a matter of inspiration than the results of limited human reasoning. God, who created us as unique individuals, loves all of us without exception and knows us completely. When we are confronted with seemingly irreconcilable differences, we can seek a sharing in God's perspective, and then decide how to act or not to act, whether to speak or to remain silent. Though we might not come to a mutual agreement over an issue that divides us, we can – with God's help – make our decision based on love rather than rejection of the person with whom we differ.

We cannot have one Christmas tree that is both green with colored lights and white with only blue lights. And we cannot be both loving and selfish in the same moment. We might think that God would only be interested in helping us with the major decisions we make, but when it comes to even the least choice for or against love, we can

expect, and if we want will always receive, some small inspiration to guide us.

In God's vast and yet finely detailed creation, differences can be the occasion for us to grow in knowledge, appreciation, and, most of all, love.