



# faith life and learning

## Practicing Tolerance in Diversity

By John Washatka  
Senior Lecturer

It should be no surprise LAPU is a diverse community, one which cultivates “[God-honoring diversity](#).” Generally, colleges encourage diversity (whether the diversity consists of different ideologies, opinions, religions, ethnic groups, political affiliations, etc.) because experiencing diversity is part of what it means to be educated. In a broader context, diversity thrives in American culture because of the nation’s commitment to pluralism.

Cliques, factions, and divisions are a threat to diversity in that they work counter to the value of diversity—which includes the consideration of perspectives we would not otherwise consider, regarding others unlike ourselves with equality and equity, and recognizing God’s hand at work in the world. Such diversity is reflected in the culmination of God’s kingdom.

Additionally, a real danger to diversity is reducing genuine differences to a sort of relativism that embraces “what is true for you is not necessarily true for me” and “what is moral for you is not necessarily moral for me.” Essentially, the danger is being intolerant of those with whom we genuinely disagree, and subsequently not permitting those disagreements to be heard or addressed. Practicing tolerance with those with whom we disagree is recognizing their right to be heard, and the possibility that we might be wrong.

I think what we are after here at LAPU is a kind of “mindful diversity” that cultivates God-honoring diversity while being intolerant of a path that leads away from truth and moral behavior.

The saying, once attributed to St. Augustine, “in essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity” is good advice as we recognize each other’s differences in the context of a learning community. At the very least, we are called upon to be civil and practice civil discourse when we have conversations and engage with those with whom we disagree. Don’t look for offense, or take offense if none is offered, or even if it is.

Since most communication in the classroom occurs via posts and emails, LAPU provides [guidelines for online communication](#) to help students and instructors be kind to one another, even in the midst of disagreements and differences.

To participate in a diverse learning community requires thinking the best about others and extending courtesy to all while expecting the best of ourselves. In this way, LAPU can experience and model diversity that is reflective of God’s kingdom.