

Hofmann died in the Ardennes Forest in December 1944. I'm still here.

I went nostalgic this past week and so I fingered up the Internet to show the football record of my high school's 1941 and 42 seasons. My school was LaSalle High in Philadelphia, member of a ten team Catholic League.

My nostalgia focused on LaSalle's game with West Catholic High, an annual powerhouse – at West Catholic's home field. Here's the post game report on record: *La Salle Ties West Catholic: C. Donohoe Scores Clinching Tally. Adding a storybook ending to a game that glistened with hard, thrilling action throughout, the Explorers of La Salle evaded a near certain West Catholic victory when Charlie Donohoe snatched a pass from Charlie Schaefer after it had bounced off an opponent's hands, and scampered the remaining five yards for the touchdown that knotted the count at 6-6.* I recall that so well because I was there as a loyal sophomore rushing out onto the field to jeer at the West Catholic stands and went home in a double decker bus full of schoolmates who made the contraption sway from side to side as we drove away.

The old report also listed the LaSalle players: *Donahue, Cifelli, Reilly, Schneider, Hofmann, Morrow, another Donahue, Villari, Schaefer, Hauck, Gibbons, Modjalewski.* And West Catholic had its *Minahans, Murphys, Kearneys, Bonners and Dillons . . .* Which pretty much defined the ecclesial and ethnic tribalism within which I grew up. The only Philadelphia I knew - now gone with the wind.

And then I began to think beyond just the facts of that day and time about what its passing meant and means today (like, you know: philosophize). That was almost eighty years ago. We were on the threshold of radical changes that have since refashioned the whole complexion of the nation, the world. We did not anticipate change back then; homogeneity was the rule. Other races and ethnicities were left to be caricatured by Hollywood as entertainment. And judging from the news of today, generations since are still having a hard time dealing with diversity.

It's as though many of us Christians have forgotten what that whole Pentecost demonstration of long ago proclaimed – the manifestation of a theologically based unity in diversity (as exemplified by our Triune God): *Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, . . . Now there were devout Jews from every nation . . . staying in Jerusalem . . . “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? . . . how does each of us hear them in his own native language? [And here the text expands to permeate the known world of the time.] We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans and Cappadocians, from Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, travelers from Rome . . . Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.” They said . . . , “What does this mean?”*

It means we human beings and all the things upon and above and beneath the earth and stars – are brothers and sisters – kinfolk – and as human beings we should think and behave as such. It's about time we began to *know* each other while retaining the wonders of diversity – which characterizes somehow the very nature of God.

