

Cristina Doran  
“Sfantul Sava” National College

### **My Way...? Your Way...?**

We live in a world full of diversity and ever-changing circumstances. Things that once seemed to be far away from us and that we merely heard of are now right beside us; while walking on the street or going to school, we are surrounded by people of a different race or religion, people whose opinions, beliefs, tastes may not be the same as ours. The world is getting smaller and smaller – it is easier than ever to get in contact with people on the other side of the planet, but are we prepared for such closeness? Through technology, we have the possibility to communicate with others, but can we really have a dialogue? Can we exchange opinions and accept cultures which are so different that they don't even seem real to us?

Everybody is aware of the fact that only tolerance can help us relate with the people around us, but what does tolerance mean to each individual? It is an ambiguous concept that may be perceived in a multitude of ways. When speaking about tolerance, we generally think of people living far away from us, in remote places, and who believe in things we don't understand. But we mostly need tolerance in everyday situations – when we discuss a subject with a friend whose opinion is different from ours; when somebody listens to music we don't like; when a relative makes a decision we do not agree with. Being tolerant means accepting things we don't necessarily like and being aware of the fact that you can learn something from anyone.

Being tolerant doesn't refer only to passively accepting that someone is different – such a situation is closer to indifference than to tolerance. We shouldn't just acknowledge the fact that there are differences between us and someone else; we should try to understand the reasons and the way of thinking that caused them.

Of course, tolerance is not a value that we are born with; on the contrary, the natural tendency of humans is to reject unknown and potentially dangerous situations. But tolerance should come along with education and with a better understanding of the human nature. *'It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it'*, said Aristotle. Tolerance doesn't require forgetting our own beliefs, but being able to analyse others' thoughts as objectively as possible, to judge whether they are in accord with the moral principles or not, to be ready to leave prejudices behind us and admit that we may be wrong.

There aren't two identical individuals on Earth; therefore, being intolerant and rejecting someone because they are not like us would eventually result into a life of loneliness. Fighting against differences and trying to force our point of view onto others would have as a consequence a life of never-ending and pointless struggle. On the other hand, peace and harmony come from accepting differences; wisdom comes from truly understanding them and being happy when watching their variety. As Friedrich Nietzsche concisely stated, *'You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist.'*