

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY

The Changing Face of Britain & Ireland

13 September 2009

Reflections based on personal stories

"Who do you say I am?"

Mark 8:29



STRANGER.... person in a place or company that he/she does not belong to.

Stranger... To be a stranger or to feel a stranger... two different things. Anyone can feel like a stranger in his/her own country. Feeling like a stranger and feeling estranged can leave you with a queer feeling of being misplaced or a misfit... Being a stranger or foreigner to a region or a nation can be a refreshing and positive experience for both stranger and the strange land ... for a while.

"You are not a stranger in a strange land" God says. Sometimes the strange land can increase the feeling in the stranger of not really belonging.

FOREIGNER.... person born in a foreign country or speaking a foreign language; foreignship, imported animal...

Sometimes being approached as a 'zoo animal' increases the foreigner's feeling of not belonging to this place, of obviously not belonging if his/her colour of skin or different way of speaking is made obvious by the staring or the constant reminder: "You're not from here!?"

Then the stranger finds him/herself thrown back on an island on his/her own, and it makes it more and more difficult for him/her to regain footing.

"You are not a stranger in a strange land" God says. The attitude of the God who came to earth from heaven, of the One who died on the cross because men rejected him and told him, "You don't belong!" ...is undivided ... His eyes want to see people free, embracing one another and not observing one another through bars of prejudice, mockery, condescension or starry eyes of fantasy. His heart is all-loving -there is no shadow of mistrust and rejection – all-accepting and does not differentiate people through race, colour of skin, ways of speaking, languages or cultures.

No.

He came as your peer.

An outsider looking in can bring an unbiased opinion to a problem,

A fresh view into a situation

Because of his different cultural experience and some acquired-in-another-land knowledge.

An outsider can speak his/her mind,

He or she can speak of the "elephant in the room" ... the obvious that nobody dares say and shuns away or ignores...

He or she can reflect the distant eye of the one who sees without belonging, the horizon and distant shores that is not yours, the red kite over the ocean of fear.

The albatross wounded

Washed ashore with a story

That is not yours.

Listen,

As into the shell combed on the strand.

Listen to the sound

Of the seas,

The orchards, the nectar of

The pomegranates,

The untold story,

With the gritting taste of sand in the mouth,

The story yet-to-be,

Do not rush it, do not stop it, do not laugh at it,

Neither judge it nor throw it on the deserted island of common understanding,

But let it reach the point when the story unfolds,

The truth about them,

The truth God gave to them,

The treasure of a different approach.

Listen...

Forget looks and accents,

The obvious difference,

And see the beautiful gift of God in their eyes, their heart and soul,

The murmur of the seas, faraway horizons, half-hidden or yet-to-be revealed...

Look and see

What God has,

In His wonderful craftsmanship,

His mercy,

Given to us from all nations and creeds,

Us from different idioms and voices,

Hear us, O creator and saviour,

You friend of the weak,

You befriender of the friendless,

The God of the universe and each

man and woman of every shore and nation,

Keep us from harm,

and harming each other,

Keep us in peace, understanding and harmony.

Amen.

From *Inter-Cultural Insights – All-Ireland Consultative Meeting on Racism (AICCMR)*,
September 2008

To obtain free copies of this resource, please contact info@embraceni.org