

YORKMINSTER PARK REFLECTS



Friday, June 14, 2015

A Reflection from Phaby Utomo & Rick Hariman

Created by God and Created Equal

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." – Genesis 1:27

The Holy Land is a special place in so many ways and on so many dimensions. For Christians, it is the place where we can deepen our faith and walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

In the 12 short days during our recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, we learned a great deal about ourselves and our faith. Being in the Holy Land, we were often and easily overcome with emotions and experienced many moments of profound spiritual connection with God. And throughout our journey, we realized that our pilgrimage experience was that much more enriched by being in the fellowship of believers, those within our own group and especially the many others who had come from all over the world. Most of us shared a common purpose – we were on a spiritual journey to discover the Land where our Lord Jesus once walked, ministered, healed, died and was resurrected.

Many traveled from far and near to visit the Holy Land – we identified groups from Brazil, Portugal, Spain, Eastern Europe, India, Philippines and Indonesia to name a few. Like us, they too had come to see the Sea of Galilee, to visit the Mount of Beatitudes, to walk the Via Dolorosa and to pray at the Tomb of Christ. Each time we visited a sacred place we would have a time of devotion and sing hymns, as would the other groups of pilgrims.

While we realized that not everyone was on a pilgrimage, we nevertheless felt the unity of being together in this special place. Though we might have spoken in a different language, were of a different nationality or skin color, or had come from a certain economic or educational background, suddenly those differences did not matter. Being in the land where God showed His love for us through Christ, and seeing the faces and hearing the voices of the people around us reminded us that we are all His creation and we are created equal in His eyes.

Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

"For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him" – Romans 10:12.

It is human nature to identify with some people more than others based on a number of things including preconceived notions and first impressions. We all struggle with a tendency to judge others. Yet such

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behavior is incompatible with our faith and our profession of love for Jesus.

We visited Abuna (Father) Chacour in Ibillin on our second day in the Holy Land. He welcomed our group and another from Australia. In his hour long presentation, he gave us many moving stories about his life as an Arab Christian living in Israel and the Middle East. One thing he said that stuck with us was, "I tell people I am a Palestinian and immediately they think I am a terrorist."

Sadly, our views are often shaped by the things we see and hear around us. Even in our own community, we sometimes find ourselves passing judgment on someone or have prejudices against another because he or she dresses or speaks differently. But Jesus taught us, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you"- Matthew 7: 1-2.

The equality we refer to is our mental and spiritual attitude of love and acceptance toward one another. As we desire to walk more closely with God, may we also learn to see the world through His eyes and remember that God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34).

Let us also remind ourselves that each person we meet, no matter their background, is someone whom God created and whom Jesus gave His life for. Since God went through such lengths to offer his love to everyone, how then can we favor one over another or view anyone else to be than anything less equal?