**Racial Justice: Why Bother?**

This is the third and final one in this series.

Why Bother? Because without you and the others the body of Christ is not complete. The church deems all that we are and we have a gift. And we are called learn to share those gifts big-heartedly and seek the good of each other. In learning to do so we fulfil a function of the church. The church, by definition, is categorically inclusive because God is inclusive – inclusive in both its reception and devotion. This is central to Christian faith and practice because Jesus died on the cross and rose again for all – ‘all’ being the operative word. The simple point - a profound insight as well – is that race or anything else should not be a hindrance to our belonging together as the body of Christ.

In fact, we are all baptized into one body. In St Paul’s words, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit … If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it., all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (I Corinthians 12. 12ff)

Baptism is a moment of grace at which we receive new life in God in Christ. It also marks the beginning of being part of the body of Christ - the Church. When we seek racial justice, we seek to protect the unity in diversity of the body of Christ.

Why Bother? Because the world belongs to God and not to us. Some people tend to think that you need to live where you were born. They think, of course it is a mistaken view, that their place of birth belongs to them. They can’t be more wrong than that. God created the entire world and the entire world belongs to God. This means that it is absurd to think that black people should live in Africa or the Caribbean, brown people in Asia and white people in the West. The truth is that God calls us to go from everywhere to everywhere. At houses of worship, we sing the words of Isaiah, “I will go Lord if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.” Further, the great commission of Jesus reveals the heart of God - “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Matthew 28. 19). Local communities and societies’ at large, in the light of this mandate, should truly welcome and embrace people of all nations, cultures and races. Perhaps it would be rewarding to think, this racial equality week, of ways in which racial integration can be promoted, cherished and celebrated.

Why Bother? Because we need to imitate heaven here and now. We need people of all colours, nations and tribes to relish a foretaste of heaven here on earth. The Book of Revelation says that there will be people of all tribes and nations in heaven. To quote John, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands” (Revelation 7. 9). People of diverse and disparate groups provide us a glimpse of the variety and glory of God’s creation in the world and the heaven – the world yet to come.

God in Jesus Himself welcomes everyone for His Grand Banquet. He invites all of us, from all cultures, backgrounds, colours and castes to the great feast, the unique feast none of us can repay. Racial Justice is part of practicing life in heaven here and now. The wisest thing we can do, in relation to racial justice, is to prayerfully thank God for each other and make friends of all nations, tribes, colours and races because we are in this together for eternity – and that is an exceptionally very long time.

Godfrey Kesari