

## Reflection 24 - **UBUNTU**

### “If I diminish you I diminish myself” **BISHOP TUTU**

(In my culture and tradition the highest praise that can be given to someone is, “Yu u nobuntu”, an acknowledgement that he or she has this wonderful quality, ubuntu. It is a reference to their actions towards their fellow human beings; it has to do with how they see themselves within their intimate relationships, their familial relationships and within the broader community. Ubuntu addresses a central tenet of African philosophy:

The essence of what it is to be human.... People with ubuntu are approachable and welcoming, their attitude is kindly and well disposed, they are not threatened by the goodness in others because their own esteem and self - worth is generated by knowing they belong to a greater whole. Ubuntu would use the phrase, “I am human because I belong”. Put another way, “a person is a person through other people”... “I am what I am because of who we all are”). [Internet]

This piece of writing caused me to sit up and take notice and certainly was the inspiration of one of our prayer sessions here in the Philippines. South Africa has had its ups and downs and that is probably an understatement. The interesting thing is that the countries that go through the most difficult trials and suffer the most blatant injustices somehow produce the greatest leaders and the most extraordinary human beings. Mandela and Bishop Tutu are two such leaders and are individuals who have gone through hell and lived to tell the story. So many heroes who have stood up to injustice and spoken out have been killed or silenced so it's great every now and then to see some emerge alive and able to bring about change.

Here in the Philippines we have our heroes but unfortunately they are all dead ones. People who speak out and put their lives on the line are the people who are worth listening to. But they are also the People who are sought out and imprisoned or even destroyed by the powerful and those who have the most to lose if justice and equity prevail. Such men as Jose Rizal and Adres Bonifacio will continue to inspire the Filipino People and Statesmen and Women today will continue to quote them in the cause of wanting to impress. Here in the Philippines, like many countries, the poor bear the brunt of corruption and incompetence. The Spanish, then the Americans, seem to have set the Philippines on a path

that is intent on self destruction and it will take a great leader to bring this country around to some semblance of justice and equality. The question to be asked is; where are the people going to find such a person? The Catholic Church in the Philippines has been a wonderful catalyst for good and yes, has taken the lead for change in the past. But the question also asked today is; can they continue to play this role or are its leaders also having difficulty rising to the occasion when the country most needs them?

“I am what I am because of who we all are” are very profound words and coming from someone who has suffered much at the hands of the rich and powerful we should sit up and take notice. I sometimes wonder if God is not pulling the strings at times for in so many instances good does seem to triumph in the end. Now South Africa is still on their journey and has still to work through many big problems if they are to live harmoniously as a united society. Indeed the Philippines is also going through a struggle which has yet to be resolved. In any human society there is a universal tendency to seek out from its member’s persons of desirable qualities, such as bravery, fortitude in times of adversity, a willingness to sacrifice their lives for the benefit of the greater good. Now is the time for such searching to proceed with urgency as we badly need such a person to help us put things right again.

The Filipino people, as I have said many times, are a happy and peace loving folk, who would rather grin and bear any hardship than confront the person causing the problem. Truly a UBUNTU people. The people, however, have their breaking point and in the past this has been reached causing massive change and in some cases much suffering. I recall two administrations that have fallen due to what is called here, “people power”. I pray that wise heads will prevail and our leaders will instigate change that is so badly needed so that poor people of this country will get justice and not have to rise up and demand change so that all may live in harmony and dignity.

***Until next time Peter T***