



## People, Trees and Rosemary Chicken by Braulia Ribeiro



I was at the table for dinner the other day, during the LTS in Barbados. It had taken me a while to find a seat, after standing in line for a few minutes. With a plate full of rosemary spiced potatoes and chicken I finally find some room to sit in the midst of a noisy crowd.

Remember that one blind man whom Jesus healed first partially, then totally (Mark 8:22-25)? At first he saw people like trees. Paul Hiebert, an anthropologist, says that we tend to see people who are not part of our acquaintance group, or cultural context as a mere part of the landscape.

(Cultural Anthropology, Baker Book House, Michigan, 1983).

To use more biblical words we tend to see people as trees. Jesus had to heal the blind man twice so to cure his blindness.

Back to the LTS - Sitting at the table right in front of me there was Grace from India, eating with her hands of course, together with Suvanaraju and Saji. Inside the black sea of her eyes I could see the suffering she went through in life since she was little, the struggles of the city of Calcutta where she works, and the hope and dreams that God's been communicating to her. Saji, a Brahma in his origin, was engaged in an animated talk and while I heard him; I imagine the music that his voice sings in the ears of all the terminal aids patients that he ministers to, the joy and relief that the loving care he gives them mean for them, with his own hands that were not raised for "menial" work.

Behind me was Joseph, impossible not to notice him, with his garments of an African prince, and I pondered that the real majesty about him is the life that he brings to people when he is preaching to the Barbadian church. Besides him Antoine and Cissy in their quiet dignity, and looking at her face of exotic beauty I wondered to myself what God is up to in their lives. And there was Wanda, hard working young Barbadian, sacrificing leaving behind the beauty of her home land to be for 3 years already in Albania, planting churches in a cold and desert environment. She so knows she is planting her garden there...

And if I kept looking around the room I would see so many more people, (that is why it is difficult to find a seat). I see Alla full of young Kazahkistani life, dreaming of God's transforming power invading central Asia, talking to Brenda a Kiwi full of the same sturdy determination that make Kiwis wonderful pioneers. And I remembered the day they both danced the meringue with a group of people from 18 different nations. Omayra from The Dominican Republic, capably formed the team, making them swing their hips, teaching them new steps, mixing a tape with national music from four different places and helped everybody feel comfortable and happy in the process! What an incredible young leader Omayra is!

I saw Nancy besides another table. She is eating calmly and carefully, probably meditating what is next to be done. That must be the same careful and calm way she meditated about pioneering missions mobilization in Chile, Argentina and so many other Spanish speaking nations. I remember when she told me - "I had to go



with the New Zealanders for a discussion group, but my heart stayed with the Chileans. Now I want to go where my heart is..." And when I heard that I prayed, oh God, give me the same missionary blood that runs in her veins!

Yes, in that day I could see many visions around the room, many dreams coming true in many lives that have transformed others, but who are also being transformed. My rosemary potatoes were cold by then, but I felt stronger in my own faith, and I thought of the poem from Octavio Paz, a Mexican writer and Nobel Prize recipient who wrote the poem "Blanco".

I see myself in what I see,  
as if within my eyes  
a much cleaner vision.

Look at me  
in what I look.  
My creation is what I see.

To perceive it is to conceive,  
seas of thought.  
I am the creation of what I see.

I am the visions that I have, the dreams that I dream. I am the good I see in people and the hope I see the midst of difficulties. I am the creation of what I see. God give me vision to see people the way you see them. May that be so.

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