

IN DEFENSE OF DISCRIMINATION

Discriminating: (adjective) discerning, perceptive, appreciative, tasteful.

We were made to discriminate - to behold beauty, delight in differences and express evaluations. That includes being racially aware.

My two black sons are night and day but both devour fried chicken, like to hang, have a sixth sense called rhythm, and ooze cool. Their white parents and sisters dance like zombies but enjoy vegetables, orderliness and books.

I know, I know, there are black nerds and white rappers, but I'm just enjoying my family and how we align (or not) with undeniable and justifiable stereotypes. Race (with grace) can be a lot of fun. *Parental Warning (in case you're considering a kid sleep over at our place): we like good racial jokes and are not always politically correct.*

One of my daughters' best high school friends was from Rwanda and I once asked her if she was Hutu or Tutsi. She smiled and said nothing for her parents had taught her to drop that distinction. Sad, but understandable - they didn't want people foolishly jumping to conclusions, criticism and crime. That silence though hindered me in appreciating and affirming her race, culture and history. It hid a wonderful part of who she was.

Graceless discrimination in our pasts often leads to denial, dismissal and the dissolving of differences in our presents. It leads to a scared, sullen and same world, a sensitive yet silent world in which we're taught to tolerate but not enjoy one another.

Graceless discrimination is what most of us got exposed to in elementary school and became experts at in middle school. It's a happy day when kids first notice human differences: genders, colours, personalities, tastes, talents, tendencies, mental and physical abilities, etc. It's a sad day when we too-soon lose the childlike knack of embracing friends with eyes and arms that at once discern and appreciate, discriminate and welcome. It's a sad day when we begin using distinctions to pull others down and prop ourselves up.

Why do we do it? Not because we primarily detect inherent wrongness in another's qualities or quirks but because we first fancy and fear deficiencies in our own. As in Eden, primeval shame gets us hiding our true selves and blaming others.

Yesterday, I visited an organization in Saint John called PRUDE – **P**ride of **R**ace, **U**nity and **D**ignity through **E**ducation. I like that.

Here's some education that is slowly but surely transforming me: God is not indiscriminate or tolerant towards me! He fully knows, loves, chooses and prefers me, and all that without excluding you. This is the miraculous mystery of being in Christ, who is God's one and only known, beloved, chosen and preferred One.

Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do and it brought him great pleasure.

He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his own body the dividing wall of hostility.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom all families in heaven and on earth get named. I pray... that you may have power... to grasp how wide, long, high and deep the love of Christ is.

Ephesians 1:5; 2:14; 3:14,18