

Marguerite, fcJ



A bus journey that changed my perspective

Once I was on a long bus journey in Bolivia and I had an experience which made me reflect on who I am.

The bus got very crowded and a few people had no seats so they had to sit on the floor. Near me on the floor there was a young man. After travelling several hours, night came on and I was feeling a little tired and I decided to adjust my seat so I could stretch my legs a bit. The young man on the floor near me made a sound and moved. I was horrified to see that he had had his hand on the bar which moved my seat and his fingers were trapped! I got up and asked the driver what could be done. He told me to sit down – nothing could be done. I offered to change places with the young man but he refused. I had a clean handkerchief and wrapped it round the young man's hand. Of course I apologized but that was no help to alleviate the pain of the hand.

We were a couple of hours from the next stop which was Potosí where the bus had to take a break for 15 minutes or so. I told the young man that we would look for a doctor there. When we got off the bus he quickly disappeared from sight! I realized that I had not even asked his name and had no idea who he was.

My reflections were:

This young man had bought his ticket on the bus and so had I. There was no seat for him – there was one for me. He had a right to rest where he was on the floor. I had a right to rest where I was on the seat and the seat was adjustable. He meant no harm to me and I meant no harm to him. By being where I was, by adjusting my seat I had inflicted pain on him. By being where he was and putting his hand on a bar, he had suffered pain. I had caused him pain.

I did not choose to be who I am, to have been born in London England, to have received all that made me who I am. He did not choose to have been born in a small village in the Bolivian mountains (I am presuming this) and to have received all that made him who he is.

“ We are both travellers in this Universe and our footsteps and our very being in the place we are in and the destinations we are called to, affects everyone and everything around us including each one of us.

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I learnt that even though I have an adjustable seat on the bus, and I want to adjust the seat, it may not be the most kind to do.

At another time I found myself sitting on the floor of a bus and found it a good place to be because I could see my small part of the world from a different point of view.

I recalled then that when I was 11 years old, I had decided to remember what it was like to be 11 when I would be “grown up”. The point of view makes a lot of difference to where one is in this business of travelling around the universe!

Since those long ago journeys on two different buses, I have continued pilgrimaging in the company of many different travellers. Sometimes I have found it difficult to step into their shoes – to see the world from their perspective. Recently I have not literally sat on the floor of the bus, but I try to change my perspective so that I can listen more respectfully to another traveller when we meet on this same journey. I have been able to modify who I am a little but not essentially, and have come to realize that it is not my place nor is it in my power to change the other traveller. I can only be grateful that we met and that this meeting is another moment on the journey which will inevitably affect our universe.



Marguerite collecting plastic for recycling at Barrio Solidaridad, Salta, Argentina



“ Aussi longtemps que vous serez unies par le lien de la charité rien ne pourra vous nuire. ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Fidèles Compagnes de Jésus

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