

# FROM WHERE I SIT

JOHN COONEY

## I Like Humans!

Humans, in my opinion, are fascinating. No matter where I am – here at home, across the ditch in Oz, up north in Asia, on the far side of the world in Europe, Africa, the UK or the Middle East – I find myself utterly captivated by the humans I meet: their similarities and differences, skin-colours and faces, clothes and hair-styles, music and cultures, languages and accents, histories and traditions, values and faith.



**M**y all-time favourite habit when I'm in some distant corner of the planet is to just sit and observe ... make eye-contact and smile ... watch the locals as they go about their daily lives

... break the ice and say hello ... and (even if we can't fully understand each other) have a friendly chat.

It doesn't just happen when I'm away. It happens when I'm home, too. I love multi-cultural New Zealand. I love the mix'n'match variety that we find in Godzone these days. I love it that we're a great-big-melting-pot-in-the-making. And I love the people, in all their rainbow shades, who've chosen our small islands as their home.

The wonder of it struck me just recently when I went shopping. In the course of no more than an hour I had the good fortune to greet, talk with, get smiled at, be served by and do business with a whole bunch of

new New Zealanders:

- the talented Vietnamese lady who owns a clothing-alteration shop and knows how to make my shirts and pants fit my short, stocky frame

- the energetic Turkish guy who brews good coffee in a little café and nearly splits his face with a grin whenever we see each other
- the bright young Indian girl who works in the shoe shop across the way and never fails to give me a cheerful, sunny wave
- the Chinese masseurs in the middle of the mall who work magic on my stiff neck and giggle at my halting Mandarin
- the Israeli students in the next booth along who once sold me some stuff made from Dead Sea mud and won't stop trying to sell me more.

And everywhere I looked I saw bright-eyed Kiwis of all shapes and sizes, ages and descriptions – Pakeha, Maori, Polynesian, and more – doing who-knows-what, going who-knows-where, getting on with their busy-busy lives.

Most of these people, in my experience, are good people, decent people, hard-working people. And most of them are helping make New Zealand a better place. They've got names worth knowing, stories worth hearing, families and kids and longings and dreams.

Most of them, I've discovered, are just as

interested in me as I am in them. And I *owe* them, I reckon – because they're enlarging my world and enriching my heart.

In fact, I feel I've wasted an opportunity if I buy something, eat somewhere, drink coffee or cross the street – and fail to connect (even a nod or hello) with the people I meet. And, invariably, when one of those conversations starts up, we find we have far more things in common than we do things that separate us.

It's a gentle reminder, I reckon, that variety is the spice of life. And it's also our Creator's trademark. Which is why, instead of a box for a home, he's given us a limitless universe to live in. Instead of one gorgeous flower, he's given us a zillion. And instead of black-and-white, he's filled our world with kaleidoscopes of colour.

Whatever else we might think of God, we can't accuse him of being dull and drab. He prefers originals to photocopies every time. And those unpredictable combinations that he's built into humans are amongst his very best ideas. ❁

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GRAPEVINE'S EDITOR USED TO WATCH GOLF ON TV, BUT HIS DOCTOR TOLD HIM HE NEEDS MORE EXERCISE. SO HE NOW WATCHES TENNIS.

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**THORT**



***Fishing is boring, unless  
you catch an actual fish,  
and then it's disgusting.***

***(Dave Barry)***