

# WHY ARE WE DIVIDED?

by Dilhan Muttukumaru

## ***We live in a troubled world.***

Having lived in certain parts of the world has convinced me that this fragile planet of ours is now in worse political, economic, social and spiritual turmoil than ever before. I am further convinced that if any single institution can truly minister to the physical and spiritual needs of this hungry, thirsty, weary and lonely world, it is the church – the church centered and deeply rooted in the boundless love and compassion of the revolutionary Jesus of the Gospels, the Word made flesh.

The two opening words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father," should sensitize all Christians to the agonies and struggles of our brothers and sisters both nearby and abroad. It should make unthinkable a divided church or a divided Christ. Yet the Christian church is one of the most divided institutions today, and this to me is another of the great tragedies of our times.

The unity of the church finds its root in the heart of God Himself. "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.*" The fact that the Son of God shed His blood for all human beings living today is mind-boggling. How heartbreaking to Him is a divided Body!

Too long have theologians debated little differences that tear apart the Body of Christ. When the impoverished and oppressed people of the world cry out for bread and for the Bread of Life, what really matters is the lordship of Jesus Christ. I believe that Christ's virgin birth, atoning death and resurrection are doctrines that all true Christians must hold to. But so is doctrine of the oneness of the Body.

In a remote Indonesian village, I saw a practical example. The devastation of an earthquake deprived the villagers of food. A Protestant minister there had access to emergency supplies donated by various agencies, but he refused to release the food to the people until they attended a time of praise at his church.

A Jesuit arrived on the scene, however, and sensed what was going on. He went to minister. As soon as the minister opened his door, and before any words could be exchanged, the Jesuit embraced his brother in Christ. The minister was speechless. The Jesuit then introduced himself and after a brief

conversation said, "My brother, let us forget the little differences between us, and remember that you and I serve the same Lord. Let us ask ourselves what Jesus would have done in this situation."

The minister stared at the floor for a while, then lifted his eyes and said to the Jesuit, "My brother, I never thought of it this way. Come, let us go to the people with the food."

Our model is the Suffering Servant. All of us in the Body of Christ must come closer together, recognizing that we all serve the same Suffering Servant, the now risen Lord and Savior Jesus said of Himself, "*Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45, NIV). And when He sent forth His disciples, He said, "*As the Father has sent me, even so I send you*" (John 20:21). The servant role, modeled on Christ, must be the unifying element in the church we seek in our troubled world to fulfill the Master's prayer "that they may be one as we are one."