

A Mixture of Races, Religions Found In Fiji

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July 15, 1975



Market stall in Fiji featuring native crafts

May 27, 1975:

With great joy to bring our Heavenly Father's message to a new nation, I arrived in Suva, Fiji, on April 25, 1975. When I arrived in Fiji it was like our Heavenly Father showed me a new room of His house and told me to prepare this place for His arrival, which will be very soon. The restoration of the room started with great excitement.

Always I felt Heavenly Father behind me, telling me to hurry, that there's no time to rest. The first person with whom I came in contact was an Indian lady who is a teacher at the Catholic Marist Training Center on the island Of Taveuni. (Fiji is made up of 300 islands of which 100 are inhabited.) She became very enthusiastic about us when she heard that three missionaries from different nations would work together for God in Fiji to unite all the different religions. "This is what Fiji needs," she said. On the day before she left Suva for Taveuni we went together to see the secretary of the Catholic bishop of Fiji and also the Home of Compassion where Marist nuns serve. She told them about our great ideas in working for God on an international level, and they all offered to help and invited us to come visit whenever we can.

A very spiritually open man, the grandson of the last chief of Rotuma, who translated the Bible from English into Fijian and Rotuman for the early missionaries, has visited our center several times. All day he is reading the Divine Principle and speaking to his friends about it. Last week he read through the book two or three times. His wife and five children, ages 10 to 23, see a big change going on in him. He wants to bring his whole family with him to the center. In the future he would like to help us translate the Divine Principle into Fijian. This will be a big help, because many Fijians in the villages cannot speak or read English.

Another visitor, an Indian girl, felt like Christ was speaking to her when she first heard about the Divine Principle.

Some facts about Fiji: this is a multi-religious country, with eight different Christian churches as well as Hindu and Moslem. Many different races live here. (Of the population of 551,000, 240,000 are Fijians; 280,000 are Indians; 3,000 are Europeans; 4,000 are Chinese; and there are 24,000 others of assorted backgrounds.) The Indian influence on the culture here is especially great, although it brings many problems for our work.

The people are very friendly and open. Many of them are concerned that there are so many different religions and are seeking for one God, who belongs to everyone. After this first month in Fiji it seems like I have spent my whole life here. It gives me so much joy to work here for our Heavenly Father.

One Indian member who has now moved into the center came through a little old lady peeping in our windows one morning, her aunt.

We are grateful to be working in such an open, responsive country. None of us have worked anywhere where the people have been so genuinely helpful and curious about our work.

May 1975 (undated letter):

I'm finding Suva to be a bustling, crowded city full of all sorts of people -- traditional Indians, a few Europeans, some visitors, and of course the Fijians. Almost all Fijian women wear long skirts, and many of the men wear short skirts. Some of the women wear western-length dresses over their long skirts.

I was very surprised when several people stepped aside to let me go first at the bank. I was also surprised to see a few people sleeping on shelves under the counters in the market.

June 4, 1975:

The mission here is going well. We have several positive guests studying the Principle and visiting our center.

We are investigating the possibilities of sending some beautiful Fijian handicrafts overseas. There are so many beautiful, good quality handmade things here: large wall hangings, placemats and coasters of tapacloth (specially treated bark); wood carvings of boats and faces, and salt and pepper shakers; bead work; really nice shell jewelry; interesting mats, baskets, handbags, handwoven straw shoes and even grass skirts. All are readily available in large quantities and at low prices.

Fiji is so amazing. The most wonderful thing is that there are people from all over living here -- many races and religions. There are strong masculine men, open air buses, kind and serving people, and best of all, interested guests coming to the center.

July 2, 1975:

Fiji is an English-speaking country and has been eagerly devouring all the books we've brought. Our students are anxious for more study materials.

We are hoping to support our missionary training program by starting a farm, as several of our members have had experience working on farms.

July 8, 1975:

One of our new members is 56 years old and studied for seven years to become a Catholic priest. He comes to the center almost every day to study. Another, in his 40's, is related to Fijian village chiefs and national officials.

July 15, 1975:

We held our second Sunday service this morning. Several people came, and another guest came an hour late, just missing the service. She stayed and heard the first lecture.