

HE KNOWS EXACTLY WHERE THE SHOE PINCHES

Don't know about anyone else but as time has gone by, I have looked back at – more like re-examined and reflected on some of our African/Cameroonian "customs and practices" – some of which I once considered "bush", from a completely new perspective, with a fresh, new understanding, and with newfound respect.

Take "**ARRANGED MARRIAGE**" for example; I am definitely with Nico Mbarga on the "**NA MY CHOICE**" camp *but* I have to admit that the BASIC CONCEPT behind the whole "Arranged Marriage" idea does have some validity and merit to it! Disagree? Then I'd welcome your explanation as to why ".COMs" like "eharmony", "ChristianMingle", "SeniorPeopleMeet", and "That'sHowBlackPeopleMeet" are "reigning" on deh intahnet, or why the divorce rate of "arranged marriages" is far lower than the "na my choice" deals – even in modern times! That said, the "Arranged Marriage" tradition remains controversial and debatable, with very plausible pros and cons on both sides of the debate but one African/Cameroonian Custom whose merit I can hardly imagine anyone taking exception to, is the practice of "**PAIRING**" someone who is bereaved with someone else who has gone through the "exact" same experience! When a woman is widowed, for example, another widow pretty much "shadows" her throughout the "die house" process – sits with her, talks to her, comforts her, advises her, etc., from a unique "been there, done that" perspective. I saw this work firsthand when Ma Mbiwan sat next to Ma Forlemu and did her very best to keep that Lady from just plain losing her mind when her son passed away tragically. (Unfortunately, on that same sad occasion, the same cannot be said of Ma Mbiwan's daughter who failed WOEFULLY to assist a pregnant Doris Forlemu Kamwa, as the former wailed far louder than the poor bereaved girl herself, - to the point that Sister Jessie Atogho and co. had to organize an emergency "Mama, Ah beg, Leff'am so Yah" Intervention Committee for backside house!!)

The Raison d'Être for this particular custom is, OBVIOUSLY, **EMPATHY!!** When "troubles assail", it is very consoling to receive SYMPATHY, no doubt about it, BUT when someone who has been in your shoes before, stands in front of you and says "**I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL; I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH**", (NOT "**I can IMAGINE your pain**"), it makes a **HUGE DIFFERENCE** oh!!!

And that brings me to the crux of today's mattah! Ah no know me wehda na because say JOHN HART STOCKTON, de Oga who composed the music to go along with WILLIAM HUNTER's "**THE GREAT PHYSICIAN NOW IS NEAR**", no be get way for fit the word "**EMPATHIZING**" inside da second line of de first vArse", that the words of the hymn read:

"The great Physician now is near,
The sympathizing Jesus;"

God rest both gentlemen's souls but, especially after listening to, reading, and meditating over **JESUS' PASSION & SUFFERING** this week, I have to split hairs on this one and say "**SORRY SAH!**" "Sympathizing" is not quite the word to describe Jesus oh! HE truly is **That Someone**

- We can take our **AGONY** to, and expect him to UNDERSTAND, because he experienced it in the Garden of Gethsemane, as He literally begged His Father to let “The Cup” of suffering pass from Him, as drops of bloody sweat ran down His face, while His closest companions SLEPT! (Nayô-nayô oh!)
- We can take our **PHYSICAL PAIN** to, and expect Him to KNOW just how we feel, because He suffered and endured indescribable pain and torture from the mulongo, the crown of thorns, the carrying of the cross “up Calvary’s Mountain that dreadful morn”, the nailing to the cross of His hands and feet, and the piercing of his side, not to talk of hunger and thirst!
- We can take our **REJECTION & ABANDONMENT** to, and know that He so GETS IT, having stood in Pilate’s Hall, **FRIENDLESS, FORSAKEN** and **BETRAYED** not by some, but ALL!!! Even His own Father with whom He had ALWAYS been one – before even time began, forsook Him at the moment when He bore the sins of us all, hence the gut-wrenching cry: MY GOD, MY GOD! WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”
- We can take the hurt of our being **TOTALLY & COMPLETELY MISUNDERSTOOD** to, and know HE will respond with a resounding “TELL ME ABOUT IT！”, and say “how for Me wey Ah cure dem, give dem chop, show dem how for live their life correct”; no be na for CROSS ah end? Didn’t I still just say “FATHER FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO”? Ah be send any man thunder? Ah go Oku or Kupe-Manenguba? No me oh! I just RESURRECTED ME JEH-JEH on EASTER SUNDAY MORNING!! END OF STORY! TOTAL “20 – NOUGHT, SHURRUP”, as in the ultimate: “SATAN, TALK AGAIN, MAKE AH SEE??!!!”
- We can take our **SCORN, SHAME & HUMILIATION** to, and take the “ASHIA, My Daughter” that He whispers in our ear seriously, because he was **SPAT UPON, MOCKED** and **RIDICULED, SLAPPED**, and worst of all **STRIPPED STARK NAKED**, (never mind that “turu” which artists respectfully add to their paintings oh! There wasn’t a single thread, or stitch of clothing on God’s Own Son when He “Hung and Suffered there” in BROAD DAY LIGHT, FOR HOURS ON END, FOR ALL TO SEE, while the totally unconcerned and oblivious soldiers played “djambo” over his clothing!!) Just read PSALM 22!

Which DISGRACE we don see??!! Which NDON??!! Na who don NAKET we FOR PUBLIC? What PIERCINGS do we have except for those in your ear lobes wey we seff-seff we take we own money buy’ am? (Have to hurriedly and REGRETFULLY add nose, lips, tongue, belly button and nipples to the “piercings list” as wey “This is the 21st Century and This is America”!!! (Oh lo lo oh!!!) Lots of respect for your C-Section Scar but it does not compare oh!!

If we can take our Marriage Problems to FAHDA IGNATIUS who has not been married a single day in his life, and take our “Personal Business” to a MALE OB-GYN wey e neva evah “see moon” as in “menses”/”kongo” no one day, EXPECTING GOOD RESULTS and FOLLOWING THEIR ADVICE TO A “T”, why would we not trust THE ONE who “KNIT US TOGETHER IN OUR MOTHERS’ WOMBS”, INSTITUTED MARRIAGE, AND WHO HAS GONE THROUGH EVERY TRIAL & TEMPTATION, FORM OF PAIN & SUFFERING we could

ever imagine and yet SUCCOMBED TO or BEEN OVERCOME by NONE, to UNDERSTAND – and HELP US THROUGH OUR EVERY “NDUTU”???

HE NOT ONLY KNOWS WHERE THE SHOE PINCHES oh, SISTAH, HE IS **LORD OF “THE SHOE”** and **MASTER OF “THE PINCH”!**

TELL IT TO **“THE EMPATHIZING JESUS”**; HE GETS IT!!!

Have a THOUGHTFUL THURSDAY!

Egbe Mbiwan Monjimbo