

ABIDE BALLI

SOC 147

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Church Visit

I attended a church service at one of the Episcopal churches in our neighborhood. Notably, it was my first time in an Episcopal Church, and I later learned that it is the official organization of the global Anglican Communion in the United States. Compared to most of the churches within the community, this particular church was quite huge, yet it was almost full a few minutes before the service began. The congregation consisted of people from almost all sociodemographic groups within the neighborhood particularly the Ghanaian community.

Another thing that caught my attention was a beautifully crafted chart on one of the side walls detailing what seemed like the church's values or commitments. They included presence, diversity, prayer, serving, and generosity. Although each had its description, they were all summed up by a verse at the bottom: "Let's also think about how to motivate each other to show love and do good works." I did not get the chance to ask more about the chart but I could tell that the church was committed to serving all people, through prayers and community services.

The day's sermon was from Mark 12:29-31. The scripture encourages Christians to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, as well as love their neighbor as they love themselves. From a Christian perspective, there is no greater commandment than these. According to the preacher, the magnificent nature of our creation bids us to acknowledge God's

virtuous intention and love towards His people, both Christians, and non-Christians. Therefore, believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we are expected to see and treat our neighbors as not only individuals but also as representatives of God's work. Based on the sermon, I learned that the church has faith-filled traditions that are passed down to generations to help build a cohesive community.

I took a moment to reflect on the role of religion in people's lives based on the things I observed and learned during the church visit. The church provides a variety of ministry, educational, and community service programs that benefit individuals, families, and the community. Such programs include unmatched spiritual care programs, youth programs, and inter-generational community outreach programs. It is worth mentioning that these church-based programs strive to serve the people, not only through the ministry but also by addressing community needs, including some of the most pressing social issues.

In other words, I learned that this particular church was a place of worship, learning, fellowship, service, and community building. How would society be without religion? Would people be living harmoniously without reference to any higher power or religious teachings? These are some of the questions I had at the end of the visit. I, however, concluded that religion plays a critical role in maintaining social order, for it gives individuals hope, comfort, and a sense of purpose and belongingness in their lives.

During the entire visit, every moment was a learning opportunity, ranging from the sermon to interactions with members of the congregation. I was impressed by the people's pride in Anglican heritage and church traditions. Therefore, we can comfortably conclude that religion and the associated tenets provide a key framework for the church and its followers to develop deep spirituality and hospitality towards the local community and all who visit. They form the

basis from which people perceive the world, relate with others, and make key decisions in their daily lives.

Several things stood out from the church visit. First, religion attempts to address the spiritual needs of the people, thus giving them a sense of identity and purpose in their lives. Second, spiritually nourished persons are usually motivated to interact, relate, and work with others harmoniously, especially in socially constructive ventures. Lastly, the church or religion is often the last resort for individuals, families, and communities during times of crisis. Therefore, it is important to always respect the religious beliefs and traditions of other people.