

The Bishop's Visit

I am originally from the South Western tip of India. Around 52 AD St Thomas one of the disciples of Jesus Christ came to this part of the world and brought Christianity. Our Church is similar to the Russian Orthodox, the Egyptian Orthodox and the Greek Orthodox churches with regards to the service. Our Bishops wear long black gowns with a head gear. Our Bishops also wear long beards. Recently our Bishop came to Newcastle to celebrate the festival of a saint.

The Bishop and I were walking up Westgate Road looking for the shop specialising in making garments for members of the clergy. The Bishop, felt cold in the freezing weather and accordingly was wrapped up head to toe in his long black gown, with his head covered with an embroidered head dress with 12 crosses representing the 12 disciples. I was wearing a pair of jeans and a cardigan and was clean shaven. As we walked up the street, we were being given suspicious looks from passers-by and from passengers in cars. A police car that passed by with two policemen in it did not take their eyes off us.

When we reached the shop, the attitude and behaviour of the receptionist and the seamstress took us completely by surprise. They were very polite and friendly to us and very respectful towards the Bishop.

The main purpose of going to the shop was to get a maroon shirt and collar worn by Bishops in the Western World. This would identify our Bishop as a Christian and not as a suspected Muslim terrorist....

Later on we went to the Central Station to escort the Bishop on to the train bound for London. As we went on to the station again we were faced by suspicious looks by the other passengers. When the train arrived and we boarded the train, there was a white gentleman eating a sandwich in the corridor. He gave us all sour looks and what appeared to me, looks of hate. Once the Bishop had been settled in it was time for myself and my friend to leave the train and we bowed our heads for the Bishop to bless us by touching our foreheads. As he did this we each crossed ourselves. The gentleman who had been eating the sandwich and had been watching the whole scenario looked at us this time and smiling, nodded his head at us in acknowledgement!

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