

Are we really conscious like Jesus? (A challenge for the New Year)

A New Year's message that challenges both you and I with regards to how conscious we are as human beings and Christians, as we strive to grow within ourselves and in our relationship with Jesus during these challenging times.

3/1/21

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Let us pray:

Light shall shine to-day upon us, for unto us the Lord is born: and he shall be called Wonderful, God, the Prince of Peace, the everlasting Father, of whose kingdom there is no end. Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever.

Amen.

The Lord be with you.

An extract from today's Gospel reading:

"When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that no-one who believes in me should stay in darkness. "

(John 12: 45-46)

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

I remember a story told to me by a friend who flew combat choppers in Viet Nam. He was radioed to a secret mission one night which required him to fly in total darkness, totally by instruments. Hovering above a jungle under heavy cloud cover, he told me that it seemed you could cut the darkness with a knife. He radioed to his man on the ground and said "what can you give me?" The guy had not even a flashlight. The landing had to be so precise, in a small "postage" stamp in the middle of the jungle-an error of five feet could crash the chopper and kill them all. Finally the man on the ground said "I have a zippo!" He said "Light it and hold it up." So in the middle of the jungles of Southeast Asia, on a top secret warfare mission, a combat chopper pilot landed by the light of a zippo lighter that pierced the darkness.

(From a sermon by John Jones, "The Light of Life, The Life is Light" 2/23/2009)

This is the power of light, no matter how small.

I am sure that many of you would agree with me that we are currently living in dark times with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the resultant loss of life, suffering and grief, never mind the loss of jobs and income that many families are experiencing. It could be suggested that this current pandemic that countries are experiencing worldwide is the first major global event since World War Two, so great is the devastating impact on so many lives.

There has never been a more important time for us as both human beings and Christians to be conscious and awake.

What does this term actually mean?

Carl Jung, a noted psychotherapist, once wrote:

“Meaninglessness inhibits fullness from life and is therefore equivalent to illness. Meaning makes a great many things endurable – perhaps everything. “

Yes, but what do these fancy words mean for you and I?

Surely, by the mere fact that you and I are alive means that we are therefore conscious and there is meaning in our lives?

The philosophers would argue a big NO!

There are many, many people who are alive but unconscious in the sense that they are merely going through the daily rituals of life and therefore their daily existence is devoid of meaning.

These souls are in essence, living in the dark.

Perhaps we need to reflect on two questions for a moment.

Firstly, what does it mean to be really conscious as a Christian?

Secondly, was Jesus conscious?

Much has indeed been written about the importance of an awakened soul that is conscious to both the physical and spiritual world but what are some of the real practicalities that you and I can identify with in order to understand what it means to really be conscious?

There has never been a more important time for you and I to be conscious in the world, both for our growth and so that we have the innate ability and capacity to help others, just as Jesus would have.

Here are some ideas as to what it means to be conscious and I have tried to include an example from the Gospels that shows Jesus to be the ultimate example of consciousness that we should always aspire to.

Firstly, if we are to be conscious and awake in the spirit, then we need to acknowledge and accept our brokenness and woundedness. We can never be in a position to help others if we are unable to first understand and grow through our own hurt and failures in our lives. It follows from this understanding that we are therefore never able to journey with others any further than we have, in fact, journeyed with ourselves. If we deny our humanity and brokenness, then we remove the chance for growth in our lives, for we then lack empathy and humility. If we work from a place of understanding of who we are in our lives, where we come from and how we have been damaged, then we are opening ourselves up to healing and growth. This is letting the light back into our lives!

This is the first step to becoming truly conscious.

Jesus was not so much interested in the arrogant and proud people who claimed to have it all together. He was much more interested in the broken hearted, those who were suffering. These were always the people that Jesus gravitated towards, for he knew that they were open to ministry, healing and the light of Christ. Remember, for a moment, when Jesus lay dying on the cross. He still had the strength and temerity to minister to the dying thief on the cross next to him, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

Secondly, if we are conscious in the spirit we need to be the person who can listen to others, as well as be the person whom others would like to speak to. Keeping quiet is one of the hardest things to do for some people, so important is their opinion of things, they are unable to keep quiet. When we learn the discipline of taking a step back and quietening our world around us, we open our souls to the spirit and word of God, we start to hear our inner voice and what our soul needs and wants from us in order to grow. Remember what I said earlier? We can only journey with others as far as we have journeyed with

ourselves. Therefore if we are to grow with others then we need to make sure that we are growing as well. Our world is full of distractions all around us all of the time. Have a look for a moment how much time we are all spending on social media platforms instead of reading or meditating. This takes discipline and inner strength but is necessary if we are to remain conscious both to our own soul and to other souls. Jesus always took the time to listen to others. He first listened and then spoke in a measured and deep manner that constituted his ministry and preaching style. Think for a moment of the story in the Gospel where a sick woman touches Jesus and she is immediately healed. "At once Jesus realised that power had gone out from him." (Mark 5:30) Jesus was conscious, his soul was awake, he was tuned into his energy and he felt the need of the ill woman and he healed her. So too, can we tune into the needs of others, but only if we listen carefully and in the spirit of being conscious. Listening and speaking in a measured and thoughtful way is carrying the light to both ourselves and to others.

Lastly, and this is the difficult one, we need to learn to embrace our suffering as a means of growing closer to Jesus. This is really hard. All of us wish to avoid suffering at all costs BUT suffering is a given fact of human life. We can never avoid suffering. It is part of our daily existence. The sooner we are able, as both human beings and Christians, to gracefully accept and embrace our suffering then are able to let the light into our lives in a new and dynamic way. Suffering, if understood and channelled properly CAN be a way for us to both understand our humanity and our Christian journey in a new and dynamic manner that can be uplifting and freeing. If we are able to accept our suffering gracefully then we are able to grow through it towards becoming more conscious of the love and light of Jesus. This is the ultimate challenge of becoming fully conscious and many of us will really struggle with this. Jesus never avoided suffering. He suffered and died on the cross for all of us so that we might have salvation and eternal life. This was part of his journey. He accepted and embraced his suffering. To be fully conscious is to embrace, accept and grow through all facets of our daily lives in a manner that is conducive to letting the light of Jesus into both our hearts and the hearts of others.

My friends, there has never been a more important time in the world for us to be strong in ourselves, strong in our faith and strong for one another. In order

to do this successfully we need to be really conscious now more than ever, just like Jesus was. To be fully conscious in ourselves and in Jesus is the challenge that we need to aspire to this year.

With God's help, we can achieve this.

I wish you a peaceful and blessed Sunday at the beginning of this New Year with all that it will bring us in terms of both joy and suffering.

Every blessing to both you and your loved ones this day.

Fr Darron.