

HOMILY – 3RD SUNDAY IN LENT – 19 MARCH 2017

'Spirituality means waking up' as Fr Anthony de Mello said. Most people don't know it but they are asleep. They are born asleep, they live asleep, they marry asleep, they breed asleep and they die in their sleep.

If we are honest with ourselves, many of us say we are tired, exhausted even stressed out of our minds. But why should that be so? When we have so many labour -saving devices? Cars, washing machines, mobile phones, even bread making machines.

Perhaps the truth is we don't understand or appreciate the beauty of human existence. So much of life is seen as a chore, a nuisance, a routine. Such a routine, that we don't really think about it too much. Everything seems a bit of a mess, when in relation to God, it is well. But we refuse to see it that way, because we are spiritually asleep. The implication is to look for a reason to be tired, to complain.

There is a story of the father who goes to wake up his son, sleeping in bed. 'Come on, it's time to wake up, you should be off to school'. The son wakes and groans, he says to his father, 'school is so dull. The kids tease me and some even don't like me. I hate school.' The father says, 'come on, no more of that nonsense. It is your duty to go to school, you are 45 years old, you are the Headmaster. You must go to school!!

In the Gospel today, Jesus highlights through the Samaritan Woman at the Well, that many of us are spiritually not waking up. We have so many "problems", apparent problems, but we are failing to link them with Jesus. Only drinking deeply from the 'Well of Jesus' can we find the solution to many of life's issues. In a sense, many of us are 'sleep walking', not waking up to the connection between spirituality and discovering the beauty of human existence, seems that every day is a blessing.

Let me give you a few examples: In Scotland today there are more people on antidepressants than ever before - connect that with there are less people celebrating their faith than before. There are more people seeking counselling and therapy than before - there are less people going to Confession. There are more broken families than ever before and there are less people than ever before having their marriage blessed by God. There are less babies being born in Europe than ever before. There are problems than ever before of shortages of teachers, nurses, doctors and priests. We abort babies and childless couples struggle to adopt!! There are more people forced to work on a Sunday than ever before, there are less people getting Mass than 25 years ago in Scotland.

The Holy Bible is a refined lesson in the spiritual well-being of human existence. It is a pure distillation of faith, family, morals and truth. Scotland, like other countries, is failing to see the dangers of falling asleep to faith in Christ.

Instead of living in isolation and despair like the Samaritan Woman at the well, Jesus invites us to wake up to the truth that it does matter to:

Keep one day a week as a day of rest
To honour our parents
To love and honour God
To share in Holy Communion
To say our prayers
To come and drink

I think that Fr De Mello, S.J. is right that many people are going around Scotland asleep. Asleep to their spiritual lives, hence they are trapped in staying asleep, sometimes with the aid of drugs, alcohol etc. Because they don't understand or appreciate the beauty of human existence.

The path to the well of the water of life is blurred, confused by secular concerns, bureaucracy, fear, social media, politics, debt, ageing, loneliness, family breakdown, unemployment.

Jesus is not even considered as part of the solution. Bishop Keenan, the Bishop of Paisley, said a wonderful thing recently. In light of all the talk of a 2nd Referendum of Independence for Scotland, he said "What Scotland needs, much more than any political solution, is Jesus. His truth and His grace and that passion is what should fire every Christian heart in our land". I could not care less, one way or another, whether Scotland becomes independent. St John Ogilvie, like the Samaritan woman at the well, found great faith in Jesus Christ and to see how without Jesus, Scotland has no hope! "He became a priest and set all his energy (Awake) to preaching the Gospel, Mass and the Sacraments, as necessary to any good future for Scotland's People".

So, I say this to you, in these 40 days of Lent, 'Wake Up'! Wake up and pray not to be put to the test, like the Apostles in Gethsemane.

Draw deeply from the living waters of your Catholic faith. Then, I promise you, that nothing will be taken for granted, all of life is a gift and ultimately, all manner of things will be well.

Amen