

Along the track

An Invitation

A long time ago now, not long after I first started teaching, I was assigned a pretty tough class, only four or five periods a week but that was enough for them and for me! Many, if not most of them just wanted to be out of there and into the workforce. The worst of it was that I had them for the last two periods on Friday afternoons and fellow teachers will understand what I mean by that.

Sometimes there are times when we can feel a bit overwhelmed or even a bit helpless, but I was given great advice then that I have since used very, very often. Ask yourself: “What are the possibilities here?” In other words, look for the positives, see the possibility not just the problem.

A few years ago a TED talk called ‘Celebrate what is right with the World’ became very popular. DeWitt Jones was a long time photographer for the National Geographic magazine and his experiences from those world-wide travels gave him a unique perspective on life. Among his words of wisdom, he offered the following: “When we celebrate what is right with the world, we get the energy to fix what is wrong”.

The world we live in today can be overwhelming at times and the questions that confront us seem so big and the pace of change feels impossible to keep up with. Anger and violence seem to be spreading, not just overseas but in our own communities. What life might look like moving forward can be daunting at times and the temptation can be to become negative, to think that all was well in the past (it wasn't) and to become very uncertain about change.

I worked with a boss some years ago who came to meetings where suggestions were made and proposals abounded. He came with this mindset: let's see how we can make this work. He had to confront very difficult situations at times, and I heard him say more than once, I am sorry that I can't do anything about that but I am here to say, what can I help you do to move forward. Most of us know that section in the Book of Ecclesiastes – there is a time for everything. A time, and that's the point. It doesn't have to be forever, we move on, we grow, we mature, we can change. We can't stay the same as the world changes around us.

How we approach situations can mean a lot to us and to others. Are we a ‘yes, but...’ person or a ‘why not?’ person? We can stay in the negative or dig ourselves out with the positive. Of course there will be times of sadness, times when we get despondent and feel unable to cope, times when everything seems too hard. But these are not the times to throw our dreams away. Sometimes when we feel we are not coping, we think we can escape by just getting busy all the time and that may work for a while but there is a time for everything! The power of a dream, no matter how small the canvas may be, can bring new energy into making life new again. Absolutely nothing new could possibly happen in the world if it weren't for its dreamers. Jesus had a dream of love, justice, peace and real happiness – we call it the Reign of God. He left it with us to bring it about and, as he said on many occasions, it is within your reach.

While dreams are not certainties, they can bring a direction, we can imagine what might be, we can imagine what I might bring to this situation and how it might be transformed. Dreams tell us a lot about ourselves, the quality of my ideals, our beliefs, our hopes. But we tend to suppress them, to think of them as a waste of time, get on with life, take it on the chin etc.

Dreams don't have to be about great things, but what I want to achieve here, in this place, in this classroom perhaps, in this neighbourhood, for my family, our parish. The fact is that without dreams, no plans are possible. Dreams help us not to be stuck in memory, impervious to today. They are an invitation to today, an invitation to a future still in process. Do you want to be part of making that?

Regards
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