

Along the track

Where Your Heart is

The UN has set aside 2015 to be the “International Year of Light and Light-based Technologies”. Perhaps that theme might give us the opportunity to shed a bit of light on where we are in our life journey, what is important to us, what priorities we might like to re-assess as we begin another year.

Technology has offered extraordinary opportunities in so many fields – the quality of our lives has been radically improved. It is easy to take it all for granted. Human ingenuity, cleverness and daring and even a bit of luck at times have helped us achieve extraordinary things. On the other hand, the speed of change, the vast oceans of information offered to us each moment by the new technologies, and the speed with which we can access information have brought with them an ever-increasing complexity, more and more choices, more and more things on offer.

It’s easy to bounce through life, trying that, tasting this, going here, going there. It’s exciting, enriching, distracting, complex and sometimes exhausting. What is difficult is trying to figure out what we are supposed to do with what we find, or learn from what we choose, what we reject, where we elect to go and what we elect to do. How do they make my life richer? The problem with running through life is that we can be so busy and distracted that it’s possible to run on empty, to outrun our deepest need, to be too busy or pre-occupied and we miss out on a ‘life-essential’ - spiritual nourishment. As Pope Francis said, “a spark of divine light is within each of us”. We have to give ourselves the time and space to find it, to be guided by it. Sadly, without that, we run the risk of becoming an empty person in an even emptier place.

As we begin another year, it’s timely to think about what Jesus said to us – where your treasure is, your heart will be there too. (Mtt 6:21). We can tell a lot about a person when we come to know what is important to him or her, where their priorities lie, into what activities they put their most thought and time and energies. In the busyness of life, and with the smorgasbord of distractions and opportunities on offer, throwing some light onto what’s most real and most precious to us is a real challenge.

There is so much pressure today to ‘be somebody’ – to live this image, to buy this or that, to be like this celebrity. The media creates instant celebrities and sheds light on just about every detail of their lives, real or imagined. Too often, we are pressured to be like them, to be someone else. None of us is immune to this pressure. The whole advertising industry is targeted on making us want to be other than who we are. But who we are doesn’t change, only who we think we are. We are created by the choices we make every day. Finding where our treasure lies helps us to find and be comfortable with who our soul, ‘our animating principle’, our innermost spirit really wants us to be. Stress, strain and tension come when we’re not being who our soul wants to be and we’re somewhere our soul doesn’t feel at home.

Perhaps the hardest question we face is to ask ourselves “What makes me really happy?” In reality, that doesn’t usually come from amassing a fortune or from doing great and momentous things. These are soon forgotten.

Happiness usually comes from the simplest, the quietest, the most unpretentious things in the world. It comes from seeking to find whatever is good in every situation, from celebrating what is right in our lives, from counting our blessings rather than the feeling that we need or deserve better. Essentially too, happiness is made to be shared. All that nurtures the soul.

As we begin another year, a few reflections might help shed some light on our journey, on working out where our treasures lie.

What are you planning to do this year? What are your dreams for 2015? No matter what our age or where we find ourselves in life, whatever condition we are in, there are still untapped possibilities within us, new dreams waiting to become real.

How did we handle life’s inevitable difficulties last year? Did we see them as stepping stones to greater experience, opportunities for growth? Or are we still carrying some residual anger, some bitterness or jealousy?

At the end of this year, what do you want to have achieved? What would you like to be remembered for this year?

Who are the special people in your life? How will I ensure this year that they know they are so special to me? The New Year invites us to look forward – to become more aware of the people who journey with us – to stop to meet them, to care for them, to listen to them, to learn from them and perhaps they will learn from us.

Are there parts of our lives which need to be simplified, parts where we need to slow down, to give ourselves time and space?

What memories are special to you – why do you treasure them? What about possessions? Why are they precious to you? What does that tell you?

In what ways will we nourish our spiritual life this year? When and how will we give time for the soul? We all do that differently – we have been created that way but we have all been created with a need to address the deepest part of who we are and what we are called by God to be. Our hopes and dreams, our vision and passion draw us to our Creator “The human being develops when ... his or her soul comes to know itself and the truths that God has implanted deep within, when he or she enters into dialogue with him or herself and their Creator...” Pope Benedict XVI

Regards
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