

How many of us have been especially sleepy this week? Losing that hour of sleep last week and then our internal clocks having to readjust...it took its toll on me. I would find myself sitting on the couch watching tennis and then the next thing I knew I missed half of the set. Not only that, being sleepy is hazardous for our driving, our general awareness of life.

Fr. Anthony DeMello was a Jesuit priest who had written many books on spirituality. A great one is called "Awareness". The first line of the book is this:

"Spirituality means waking up. Most people, even though they don't know it, are asleep. They're born asleep, they live asleep, they marry in their sleep...they die in their sleep without ever waking up. They never understand the loveliness and the beauty of this thing we call human existence."

He will go on to say how leading a spiritual life can wake us up; yes to be woke! Woke to choices and to prejudices; woke to how manipulated we are and how manipulative we can be. Woke to the freedom of God.

The other week right before Ash Wednesday I made the true statement, Ash Wednesday is NOT a day of obligation. I heard a few murmurs from people. One such person made a comment that their dead Italian grandmother would not be happy with that. I retorted that the dead grandmother in heaven would know it now and would have more important things to be concerned with.

We can be asleep to our faith, to what is truly important, to God working in our lives; and by being asleep we miss out on God, the fullness of God; we can miss out on strength and wisdom; we can miss how God has worked amazingly in his Son Jesus Christ. We miss out on life.

People still listlessly go through life thinking they must appease God otherwise they won't get into heaven. That if they don't get ashes on Ash Weds they will have bad luck the rest of the year.

People continue to drowsily dismiss that God forgives, God loves all; and so must we.

We sleepwalk through our faith, literally sometimes, missing out on the incredible richness of what it means to be Catholic, what it means to follow Jesus as we do.

The results...the number of people attending Sunday mass continues to diminish. The results, people don't live out a full life; but one of fear and anger; seeing only ugliness and sinfulness. The results, we see our faith as only between me and God; forgetting that this is a community.

And on a larger view the results are Christians attacking other Christians. People are left starving in this richest country of the world. Children struggle to receive education, food, and other resources to thrive.

Notice something in our Gospel passage, this transfiguration passage. Jesus goes up to the mountain with Peter, James and John. These three Jesus will also take with him in another situation later on. But here we are on this mountain and what happens first? Reading or listening to it we may think Jesus got all glowy and amazing, and chatted up Moses and Elijah. That may have come first in the listing, but that is not the case chronologically. It says Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep.

They missed out on this amazing mystical experience of Jesus. They only come in after this event is ending, and so do not see what happened. Peter, trying to make sense, makes that comment about building three tents, as if he can hold onto this event. But what he is also saying is that he thinks Jesus is on equal footing with Moses and Elijah. He betrays that he really does not understand Jesus, who he is and what he is doing and will do.

God then intervenes. Jesus is no equal, he is no mere prophet like Moses or Elijah; he is the beloved Son, the chosen one! He is more! He is the revelation of God. He is the Word of God. He makes known to us God.

Wake up!

Jesus, in his teachings, in his healings, in his acts of forgiveness and compassion, his acts of mercy, in his giving of his life on the cross is not merely doing good things...he speaks to us of the very nature of who God

is and how God relates to us. Jesus speaks to us how life is of value and is to be lived. Jesus speaks of following him so as to be saved in this life.

God wants us to listen to Jesus so that we can know God.

Not one who throws down sulfur and brimstone; but lifts up the lowly and downtrodden.

Not one who holds grudges but readily forgives.

Not one who imposes, but invites.

Not one who excludes based on mere superficialities, but one who includes, who desires all.

Saints are people who have been awakened to the beauty of God, in Jesus Christ.

Lent becomes a time for us to become awakened to the beauty of God, in Jesus Christ. And if it takes giving up chocolate or potato chips to do that, fine. But I suspect doing such will not.

Rather, meditate on God.

Fast from our anger and resentments and open up to forgiveness.

Fast from the desire to have more and more; and help those who have less will wake us up too.

And sometimes just slowing down, breathing and becoming more aware of our world around us; noticing not just all the badness, but seeing healing that is going on helps too.

Turn to gratitude can wake us up to God working in our lives as well.

Peter, James and John will fall asleep one more time, famously. Jesus will be praying in the garden, agonizing, searching for the strength to go forward. They will not be with him in his time of need.

Wake up.