



Mental Wealth

Inside each of us is the potential for growth and transformation.

Fr Alan Hilliard, author of *Dipping into Lent* and *Dipping into Advent* (Messenger Publications), gives his take on the wealth that is within.

‘Glory be to Him whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine’ (Eph 3:20). I find myself repeating this line of scripture over and over again when I face what appear to be insurmountable circumstances. There are moments in all our lives when things go pear-shaped and we don’t know what to do. I’m not even going to begin to give examples because you only have to pause and you can think of many moments when you were left wondering what you’d do next as you faced a stressful situation or event. Even when you realise what’s to be done you doubt if you have the energy to get started.

This is the plight of many young people today. The phrase ‘mental health problems’ can be thrown out like a cry for help when they face situations that they can’t see a beginning or end to. The description that many young people use is quite a vivid one; they can say ‘my head is melted’. As you look at the blurred streaming eyes you can actually imagine the brain of this intelligent, sincere and broken person melt like molten lead in front



of you.

In looking for a quick answer and a solution for everything we rely on our brain to have that answer. The pressure is on to solve it and to fix it – immediately. We punish ourselves further when this doesn’t happen. But sometimes the brain protests and launches into a temporary meltdown. The person is distraught because they rely on this one human organ for relief from all the problems of life, and they become increasingly despondent as they realise nothing is forthcoming. As a student said to me recently, ‘it’s only when you are trying to sort things out in your head you begin to realise that something is missing and you don’t know what it is’.

Seeking an answer to our problems in our brain and in our rational self alone is not only a limiting and frustrating exercise but also an isolating one. Furthermore it has been noted

Helping a person realise that there is more to their being than a rational confused mind is often the window that lets in the fresh air.



that many young people today do not turn at first to another person but to their computer to find an understanding of their plight as they seek to find a way forward. This, yet again, reinforces our sense of isolation and stretches our pained brain even more.

Seeking an answer to our problems in the rational self alone is not sufficient. As one writer put it 'information is suffocating thought'. The quest for an answer to our problems comes in one swift immediate moment suffocates and destroys the ability to ponder. Whereas the mind may melt, the soul is the crucible that can bear the unbearable weight and the heightened temperature of turmoil. Helping a person realise that there is more to their being than a rational confused mind is often the window that lets in the fresh air. The cool calm air that breathes relief on a summer day can also be felt on a tortured mind as

calm descends.

Many today don't understand this world that lies within. This 'power working in us that can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine' is an unknown territory. Despite years of religious education that has filled the head with ideas that for the large part are rejected, many young people haven't entered a space that tells of a deeper self that not only carries burdens but can pour the oil of kindness over our most broken selves. This space even gives the brain a much-needed break as we hold our brittle being in place in a soulful space with infinite love and compassion. There is much talk of mental health today and very little consideration given to the mental, emotional and spiritual wealth that comes from the deep and lasting love of a merciful God. No matter how wayward his Church has been, his power stills works within us. 