

September 2024

Dear Friend in Christ.

In this month of Sep which is also Pope Francis Apostolic visit to Singapore let's dare to ask ourselves this direct and searching question - Is God real and relevant to me?

You may ask why this disbelief question? The number 1 reason is that in times of deep distress, in times of sorrow, anguish and dismay, for some of us most of the times it didn't occur to us to ask God for help first. Because somehow we are still grappling with God's perceived silence, and we find God's "still small voice" (1 Kgs 19:12) to be difficult, does it not? And if we go to God at all, many times we go to Him as a last resort. When all else fails, we 'try' God, perhaps like Nicodemus (Jn 3: 12). Nowadays, it's also not uncommon some of us may even Google or ask AI bots/Chat GPT questions that belong to God. We google questions and it's very telling our devices speak back to us in response to our directive. Yes, Google screams relevance when God is silent.

The number 2 reason is that somehow there is a dark and heavy doubt in our gut. In a dark corner of our heart, we still see Him as the ethereal Jesus. So, in our health crises, economic struggles we have a desperate need for a God who matters Now - and not just matters sometime in the unknown future. Because we sweat and bleed right down here. Some just need to put food on the table and money in the bank. Some need to raise children, watching them stumble and fail and at times despise us. Some may also wrestle with the nagging problems of our interior world or the relationships that aren't working. We live in this world, constantly smacked by unkind realities. Yes, we want a Saviour for this earth/ our world, not just for heaven.

However, for most of us who are periodic doubters be reminded the promise of Christ. *"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in Me. There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am"* (Jn 14: 1-3).

Next we mustn't forget Jesus' pronouncement *"It is I!"* Or I am here! When the disciples were troubled and they cried out for fear (Mt 14: 24-32). We should note Jesus was not merely announcing His presence on the sea, He is declaring His power over the storm. He will do likewise for us all if we call out.

Yes, God shows Himself to be real over and over again. He doesn't want us to pretend He is real, all the while persisting in believing Him to be a ghostly figment. In Luke's Gospel (Lk 24: 36-45) we are told that in the locked room among His hiding friends, Jesus reminds us that He is no ghost. He did show us His substance with an offer *"Touch me"*, He invites us, He means it. He adds *"Look at my hands, look at my feet"* (Lk 24:39). The presence of God in our lives in our minuscule moments no doubt, has weight. His continuous offer is that we stand on the mountain's peak and experience Him as He exists.

The next time we find ourselves facing a worst case moment, verbalise our angst to God, just like Jesus did in the Gethsemane's garden. Jesus fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it was possible, the awful hour waiting Him might pass Him by. *"Abba, Father, " He cried out".....(Mk 14:35-36).* He told His followers to pray. (Mt 26:36). One prayer was inadequate. *"Again a second time. He went away and prayed.....and prayed the third time, saying the same words....He even requested the prayer support of His friends. "Stay awake and pray for strength".* He urged. Jesus faced His ultimate fear with honest prayer. Shouldn't we do the same?

So dear friends do whatever it takes to keep your eyes on Jesus. This Jesus we believe in is privy to what we need and He offers us exactly that. He is God of right Now! He is the God that took on our skin covering and become human. He is not out of touch with our reality. Jesus in His kindness, doesn't neglect the physical in order to push the spiritual. He does what no one else can do for us. He integrates the physical and the spiritual together as one. He makes us fully human, able not only to survive here but to thrive. That is relevant beyond fathoming. He is relevant beyond fathoming.

We may be startled to learn that in reality, we need Jesus more. As He initiates conversation. He knows us. He loves us. He wants more with us. He waits to be invited.

End with praying and reflecting Mark 14:32-35.

