

I was given a quote during the week which makes a lot of sense in modern life. It is a quote from a Zen Buddhist named Adyashanti which is a Sanskrit word meaning “primordial peace.” This is the name he took when he reached a particular level of enlightenment on the Buddhist journey. He was born Steve Gray and teaches Buddhist thought in the San Francisco area. This is what he said:

*“Octopus consciousness” is when we look ahead too hard and live inside our minds trying to have an overview, reaching in all directions, getting all tangled and caught up and strung out. “What if I can’t?” or “What if they won’t?” etc. Then there is what we might call “lotus consciousness” – just one long root dangling down into the deep, and the flower floating and quietly opening on the surface.*

The tentacles of busyness seem to be encouraged and nurtured in modern culture. I have mentioned before that if one is asked today “How are you going?” the answer most often given is, “Very busy?” It seems almost a sin not to be busy. But it is not just busyness that is the problem it is more to do with what we are busy at. Octopus consciousness is unfocused. It values the busyness rather than the content of what we are busy at. And it provides no space for stillness.

The psalmist was clear that we meet God in all of life. The writers of the psalms press the entire created world into service to help us see that the presence of God is revealed in all things and in all of life. But the writers keep a special place for Stillness. “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10. That of course is the heart of contemplation – union with the Spirit of God deep within our lives and our universe. Octopus consciousness will resist those moments of stillness wanting to fill the minutes with activity and busyness.

When Jesus asked his followers to “Consider the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin...” he was leading them into a new consciousness – a new way of seeing and living in the world. What Richard Rohr and others have called the Contemplative Mind. Now don’t think that that means there is nothing to do all day, it is in fact quite the opposite. Rather the Contemplative Mind is the cultivation of our soul or spirit our centre of being so that we are centred, focused, calm, aware and drawing our life force by going deeper within ourselves so that we meet the Spirit of God. And from out of that centre we live and work.

“Be still and know that I am God”