

The Signs of The Times



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As I begin to write this February Reflection, I am mindful of Madeline's January CEN Reflection on '**Seeing Beyond Seeing.**' She comments on the tragedy of the Bondi massacre and the continuance of tragedies worldwide. The effect that these dark events have upon our consciousness is slowly seeping into our being with every breath we take and every news item we read or hear.

Madeline beautifully invites us to dive into the wells of our own lives, to sink deep into the "*verities that lie deep beneath the surface of any darkness, violence or felt despair...*" To dive into this well is to dive deeply and courageously into that place of our truest self.

When I eventually surface from my own inner dive, I am left pondering, what then is my response to the world around me and all that is happening in it? How do I now read/interpret the signs of the times around me? How do I 'see beyond seeing' this troubled world of which I am a part? I sense my most authentic response will come from my daily commitment to diving deeply into this well of my being so that I can respond from the place of my truest self.

Jesus, in his time, said to those around him: "*You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.*" (Mt. 16:3)

As it was in Jesus' time so too in ours. The world in which we find ourselves is rapidly changing and evolving, and all of us are totally immersed in it. The times in which we find ourselves - in which we live, and move and have our being, contain both forces of light and of darkness. At present, it can seem that it is the force of darkness that prevails, and this can feel quite overwhelming.

This darkness can be experienced in present realities such as:

- Climate change.
- Wars.
- The diminishment of global order.
- International Law challenged.
- Threats to democracy and the rise of dictatorship.
- The increase of violence and hate in societies across the globe.
- Lack of respect for others.
- The rise of AI with few boundaries.
- An increasing division between the rich and poor.
- A dark energy of fear and concern for survival rising amongst nations.
- Loss of faith in Churches and Religion.

There are other issues that could be added if each of us added our own to this list.

In all of this, I find myself wondering, how do I hold it all? How do I interpret all that is happening around me, and what is my response? I know I can choose to turn my back on these 'realities' and try to live safely in my own little world, hoping that it will all sort itself out. I sense that this may be a real response for many people as they feel so overwhelmed and powerless to change the flow of events that are rapidly rising. Some choose to become very verbal, judgemental, opinionated, and slip into words and actions of hatred, violence, disrespect and fear. Some move into survival mode without even realising it. Yet I can choose to do what I can, in my own small way to assist in combatting what is happening - for example regarding climate change. I can work on my attitude to violence and disrespect of others and so strive to balance the immense heaviness and darkness around me with some degree of light drawn from my most inmost, authentic self. Then, in interpreting the times which surround me I can try to respond from this truest/deepest place within myself.



When I read the list of present realities above, a challenge slowly arises within me. Will I let myself become totally caught up in my human reactions, or can I dive deep into the well of my being, beyond my immediate emotions and reactions, beyond ego, and even seemingly beyond the self that I know? Can I sink to a deeper place, a place that enables me to see that I am at one with something Other and larger than myself? This is a oneness in the More of life, a oneness in God...in Love Itself.

To surface from such a dive enables me to respond to the challenges in our world in a deeper way and from a far different place. For, in striving to be my truest self I am able to draw on something more, something greater than myself within me, something beyond me.

When I can do this, I find myself able to:

- Dare to risk beyond my fears, beyond what is comfortable in my daily life.
- Speak my truth, my interpretations of the times calmly and confidently, regardless of whether my voice is heard or not.
- Be a bit more prophetic and daring in what I say.
- Believe in the More of Life, in Love, in Goodness and to radiate that through my very being.
- Have an inner wisdom in interpreting the Signs of the Times, knowing that darkness and death are also pathways to light, transformation, and new life.
- Dare to suffer and pay a personal cost.
- Go beyond myself to others in need.
- Consciously breathe in Life, Love, and Suffering and to surrender to each in hope and trust as part of the reality of the larger journey into Oneness.

We are all different, so the invitation to be our truest selves will be different for each of us. There will always be great and exceptional people in our world whose stories stand out. And then there will also be 'ordinary' great people who, especially in times of crisis, quietly, humbly and spontaneously respond from that place of their truest selves. Their stories are not always heard or told, but they are the strong, resilient, courageous ones who, in times of suffering and darkness, quietly, together as one, enable a light force of energy to penetrate and exist in times of utter devastation and hardship.

In endeavouring to interpret some of the signs of the times, I sense that we are on a trajectory towards darker times. Therefore, the call to dive into our wells and to surface beyond our superficial selves to our truest selves is ever greater and more urgent. In referring again to Matthew 16:3, we have been able to interpret the appearance of the sky for many decades, mainly for the benefit of our own economy and wellbeing. But now we need to interpret the signs of our times, our reality, from a much deeper, truer place within us. We need to stop looking up and start to look around, to see and to respond from the depths of our truest selves.



In our CEN time may we dive deep, beyond our outer selves to our hidden truest self within.
May we have the courage to look around and see beyond seeing.
May we read the signs of our times and truly respond from that deep energy force of Light, Love, and Life within us.

May our Hearts be One with that of Jesus in our interpretation of the signs of our times...