

**How Do You Discern?
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What do you pray for when you pray, as when you speak to God? I was educated in a convent. So, from young, I was "exposed" to the Catholic faith. So, I learnt how to pray, at least I think I know how to pray. Apart from the set prayers, I learnt how to talk to God.

My first and only gift I've asked from God since my primary years has been this – a conscience. A heavy conscience can be so inconvenient but that was what I asked for and that was what I got. I asked for it, so to speak! So, what's a conscience. The Oxford dictionary defines a conscience as a moral sense of right and wrong. I guess it means that when you have a conscience, simply put, you do know when you are doing right or wrong. When it's right, you feel good and liberated. When it's wrong, you feel lousy and imprisoned by guilt, fear, doubts, etc.

Please bear with me when I speak of conscience from the viewpoint of a Catholic. The size of the world depends on your conscience. Conscience can make the world bigger or smaller. It was the Lord Himself who said this: Two men can look at the "lily in the field" and the one sees more than the other. The first sees the stem and the petals of the flower. The second sees this and something beyond: the Providence of the Father who clothes it more magnificently than "Solomon in all his regalia".

For the second man, his conscience is something more than a "still, small voice" at the back of his head. His world is bigger and he is too big a person to be crippled by the chilling fear of punishment when he does wrong or a feeling of guilt when he dares to be unconventional. Such a man can see the whole stage and not just part of the scenery. His conscience is what we, Catholics call, "the Vision of the Whole".

In today's "specialist" world, one is cautioned not to be the Jack of all trades and master of none. Contemporary man is, therefore, forced to be small-minded. And this, because we are men of our time, can constitute a real danger to our quality of life. When we begin to look at the world through a microscope, we soon become prey to childish fears and anxieties. We become too scared to step out of line, to stand up and be counted, because we imagine ourselves to be alone.

But we are not alone. We are a far cry from being alone! As long as it is the right thing to do, we are never alone. I know it's always easier to chicken out and it's really hard to do the right thing and take the road less travelled. But I believe there are many people out there with a conscience. People who want to do the right thing. People who know right from wrong. People who can discern.

So, how do you discern? Discernment is said to be the ability to distinguish the contradictory desires prompted by the spirit and the flesh. It is the capacity in the changing circumstances of daily life to distinguish between the two paths or modes of living, and to choose the path that leads to life. So, if you can discern, it's a good thing. Because you would be free to live the life you can; the life you should, with dignity.

I'm not writing this for those who can already discern. I'm appealing to those who are ignoring their conscience; perhaps those who still want to stay captive under their "tempurungs". Or perhaps for those who have so far, lived their life according to a disordered vanity and self-centred desire to achieve only for himself and his own good. Such achievements are only short-lived delights. How much can you wear? How much can you eat? How many bling-blings do you need to adorn yourself? How comfortable should your home be? How many places do you want to visit? To climb every mountain? To cross every ocean? To have it all and yet, nothing really, at all?

How do you sleep at night, knowing that either you are part of the injustice being perpetrated or ignoring

the fact that there's gross injustice happening before your eyes? Burying your head in the sand is not a solution!

There are good people and there are bad people everywhere. I believe there are good people, too, in the ruling party, in the government and in the civil service. And among you who have been shielding your eyes from the glare of injustice. You know what's happening. Do you know what's going to happen to your children, soon enough? Do you know what kind of a country you will leave behind for your children? What do you say when you pray? How do you make an account of what you have done or for what you have failed to do? Can you look into your children's eyes and say, "My conscience is clear."

I know I'm being lofty. Only because I'm hopeful that among you people out there, there's still an iota of decency left in you. That you still have a conscience. That you still can discern. Please do the right thing and push for change. Malaysia needs a change. Malaysia needs a chance. A chance to be true to herself. To king, country and God.

Last but not least, "Happy are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear." Happiness is yours for the taking. Push for change. See you at Dataran, let's "Jom, Duduk Bantah".

God bless.

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