



**Advent 1, Year A – November 28, 2010**

**A Homily preached by the Very Rev'd Robert Pynn**

Last week my daughter directed me to a Social Media Video on youtube.com. I loved the title, "Shift Happens." The link dramatically demonstrates the scope of the social media revolution and its resulting shift in human perception and behaviour.

We experience this kind of shift not only in media but also in almost all aspects of our lives. Under the pressure to adapt one might be tempted to delete the 'f' from shift. But that would only mean that we would have to deal with both, shift and the lesser word, out of a scarcity consciousness that always takes us to the negative.

The Advent season alerts us to look for the coming of an inner shift in our existence. Today's gospel uses apocalyptic images to catch our attention. Both Gospel and Epistle warn us to live in wakefulness, not in sleep. The focus is not on the signs and wonders of an external environment. The focus is on a wakeful inner consciousness that readies us for the arrival of what we cannot know, at a time or season hidden to us until it appears.

Of course, it's one thing to tell us to be wakeful; it's another thing to achieve it. We might wonder whether it is even possible for our old brains to comply. To shed light on this question travel with me into what Peter Craigie used to call a digression, which was not really a digression.

For many years now scientists have regarded our consciousness to be a function of the brain: their technical language calls consciousness an epiphenomenon<sup>1</sup> of the brain. The current paradigm shift is that Brain Science now sees consciousness as the ground of our being and the brain as the epiphenomenon.

This paradigm shift corroborates ancient spiritual teaching about the foundational role of consciousness in our living. Consciousness provides a foundation for what we will actually choose to do out of the range of possibilities that arise when shift happens. Physicists call this "the collapse of the quantum possibility wave."

David Whyte speaks to this in his poem *What to Remember When Waking*

What you can plan (in your mind)  
is too small  
for you to live.

What you can live  
wholeheartedly (from the seat of your consciousness)  
will make plans enough  
for the vitality  
hidden in your sleep.

When you live from the heart, the mind will articulate congruent thoughts to be acted upon according to the invisible life essence that animates it.

For example, if we live as if our consciousness is our brain we become mired in the brain's emotive programs. We become trapped in egoic feedback loops that can really limit creative insights. This is partly where panic in the face of change resides.

To attain emotional intelligence we need to be conscious of the fact that we don't have to fall prey to our emotions. How many great plans of action have been sidetracked or poorly conceived by mentally intelligent folk who are at the mercy of some emotive pattern or some personal egoic agenda that controls them.

It is said that when Albert Einstein was leaving Nazi Germany for the U.S., his wife was overcome with concern about all the family furniture and household items she had left behind. "I am attached to them," she complained. To this Einstein is said to have joked, "But, my dear, they are not attached to you."

Emotions are not attached to us; because we are not our brain.

We don't have to identify with our existing brain circuits. Indeed we have the power to live from a consciousness beyond mind that has the ability to rewire those old brain circuits.

A recent study of Buddhist monks who had practiced meditation up to 50,000 hours displayed overall brain wave activity connected to higher mental functioning and heightened awareness. In fact they could change the way their brain worked, virtually on command. Inner shift happens!!

Let me offer three aspects of wakeful consciousness that help us see into the changes and shifts around us – that help us discern the coming of the Son of Authentic Humanity into shifting seas of our existence. In fact these three aspects of wakefulness describe the very mind of the one who comes in the great clouds that streak across our inner landscape.

1. Kenosis

This literally means to empty oneself. It is not renunciation or self-denial. Kenosis is simply to let things come and go without grabbing on. It leads to a state of non-clinging or nonattachment. It is a spacious consciousness that can let things be so that we can experience their true value and potential. In my book of poetry I prefaced my work with a poem by Rumi in which he says:

Once you get hold of selflessness  
you'll be dragged from your ego  
and freed from many traps.  
Come return to the root of the root of yourself.

To put it a different way – come, return to the Ultimate Consciousness at the heart of your true self – the very ground from which your consciousness derives.

2. Abundance

I have found that self-emptying opens me to the abundance that surrounds and sustains me like the air I breathe. It is only my self-protectiveness and 'old Newfie' family programming that prevents me from perceiving it. Michael Brown's take on this is really helpful:

'Giving-is-receiving' is the energetic frequency upon which our universe is aligned. All other approaches to energy exchange immediately cause dissonance and disharmony in our life experience.

I find that when I can work out of abundance not scarcity I am opened to generative options imbedded in life shifts that my fears or skeptic proclivities could never perceive.

### 3. Singleness

I strive for this but achieve very imperfectly – very imperfectly! This is a quality of enlightened consciousness in which one sees from wholeness and lives from abundance.

It is unitive seeing that breaks the mind's compulsive need to divide our perceptual field into paired opposites and sets things ajar as if we lived in a perpetual parliamentary question period. Such a view helps us celebrate our diversity and difference by accessing the creative energy in each and drawing it toward a mutually desired outcome<sup>2</sup>.

To put on the Lord Jesus Christ is to put on his kenotic mind and to act with abundance and singleness of heart. This is the mind beyond mind of the Advent message of repentance.

A last quote from David Whyte's *What to Remember When Waking*

To be human  
is to become visible  
while carrying  
what is hidden  
as a gift to others.

To remember  
the other world  
in this world  
is to live  
your true inheritance.

You are not  
a troubled guest  
on this earth.

You are not  
an accident  
amidst other accidents.

You were invited  
from another and greater  
night  
than the one  
from which  
you have just emerged.

Now, looking through  
the slanting light  
in the morning  
window toward  
the mountain  
presence  
of everything that can be,

what urgency  
will call you to your  
one love! What shape  
waits in the seed  
of you to grow  
and spread  
its branches  
against the future sky?

Look!  
Your one love comes  
even now into our midst.

“The Son of True Humanity arrives when you least expect him.”

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1. Epiphenomenon denotes a secondary phenomenon resulting from another.
  2. These descriptors are found in Cynthia Bourgeault’s [The Meaning of Mary Magdalene](#).