

33rd Sunday OT 2024 - Visualise victory

Jackie Pullinger has spent her life working with the poor and destitute, triad gang members, heroin and opium addicts. She has helped thousands to come off drugs through the power of the Holy Spirit. She has seen transformation in numerous lives and has made a huge impact on the city of Hong Kong.

Jackie wrote, 'I have spent over half my life in a dark, foul smelling place because I had a "**vision**" of another city ablaze with light, it was my dream. There was no more crying, no more death or pain. The sick were healed, addicts set free, the hungry filled. There were families for orphans, homes for the homeless, and new dignity for those who lived in shame. I had no idea how to bring this about but with "visionary zeal" imagined introducing the Walled City people to the one who could change it all: Jesus.'

Vision is a picture – 'a mental sight' – of the future that inspires hope. Vision without action is fantasy. Action without vision is a nightmare! Vision combined with action can change the world.

Many people are in a kind of nightmare. 1 in 6 people report a mental health problem (e.g. anxiety and depression) in any given week in England.¹

There are many reasons for anxiety and distress: childhood trauma, cost of living, intensity of London life, unemployment, housing problems, etc.

Anxiety and distress affect people of all ages, and both sexes, and from whatever walk of life – although young adults and low-income households are especially vulnerable.

Things that reduce anxiety and distress are: changing our lifestyles (more exercise, healthy diet, and sleep); community and friendships; professional help and therapy; and self-care practices. These are very important.

¹ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/causes/>

Many professionals say that to overcome anxiety and distress, people need a vision of success. When we have a vision, we can aim towards something higher than the things that cause anxiety and distress.

The ultimate cause of anxiety and distress is sin and death. Jesus wants a place in everyone's life to share his victory over sin and death. In Jesus, everyone can visualise and experience this victory. Faith in Jesus also helps us visualise victory in all aspects of our life.

The message today is: **Visualise victory**

Visualise Jesus' nearness – Mark: "So with you when you see these things happening [days of distress]: know that he [Jesus] is near, at the very gates... [and] my words will not pass away." Jesus casts a vision of his **nearness**. Is someone here feeling distress/anxiety about family problems, challenges at work, school mates, negative thoughts about yourself and what's you've done/not done? Jesus is **near** to you at this time. His words, this truth, will not pass away. In times of distress, visualise Jesus' **nearness**.

Visualise Jesus' sacrifice - "By virtue of that one single [sin] offering, [Jesus] has achieved the eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying." Visualise Jesus' perfect sacrifice. If your life is not perfect, if you struggle with sin/s, remember: you are human! You will never be perfect by your own strength. Everyone has sinned and falls short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Jesus ***alone*** has won victory over sin. We are made perfect – Hebrews also says 'sanctified' - through **visualising Jesus' sacrifice** for you personally.

Acknowledge sin, confess sin, avoid sin, don't be weighed down by sin.

Visualise Jesus' sacrifice.

Visualise your life shining – Daniel: "The learned will **shine as brightly** as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity." The prophet Daniel had a vision of people 'shining' at the ultimate time of distress. Life can be so dark and distressing. Don't be

foolish: learn more about following Jesus (Bible and catechism). Don't encourage sin (e.g., inappropriate jokes). Instead encourage virtue. A wise man once said: Bad is bad. Good is good. Do good! Your life will **shine!**

Brothers and sisters, what is causing you distress and anxiety? **Visualise victory**, what your life would look when you overcome it Commit it to Jesus, and Jesus to it. Offer it to God in the Eucharist. Jesus will come to you to give your vision become a reality, and help change the world!

Prayer

Jesus, thank you that I can **visualise victory**.

Thank you that you are **near** me in my anxiety.

Thank you for your one perfect sacrifice. I offer you **perfect praise**.

Help my life to **shine** in the darkness for others.

In your holy name. Amen!