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## You Want It Darker: there is a crack in everybody

By Glenn Morrison

There is a crack of humiliation and brokenness in everybody. Both our mission and identity have everything to do with letting God's unconditional light of love and healing into 'the crack'. Last year on retreat with Jean Vanier, I heard him speak earnestly about 'the crack' in our vulnerable, wounded selves. The very things that have wounded and humiliated us, broken our hearts and crushed our spirits (cf. Ps. 34:18) help us to discover the presence of God in our deepest selves. In the depths of our identity lies a mission to be seen and loved just as we are. The crack lets in the light of God, a light of unconditional love, where we may see the glory of creation, including ourselves!

Reflecting on the crack, Vanier would refer to the life of Etty Hillesum, the Dutch Jew who died in Auschwitz. He referred to Etty's writing of a 'secret innocence'. Vanier developed this in terms of relating to disabled people, of discovering their 'secret innocence,' the time before conception of being with God, of bringing people together through peace. This is quite mysterious as it relates God as the source of our existence, and the very work of looking at others with kindness. I wonder if this is a love coated in silence, teaching us how to listen to others with deep silence, taking care of what we have to say, and uttering mercy and loving kindness with a warm smile and gentle eyes.

Have you ever listened to Leonard Cohen's song, "You Want it Darker"? His haunting song comes with a refrain, "Hineni, hineni, Hineni, hineni" which he translates loosely in the following verse, "I'm ready, my lord". Hineni in Hebrew means "Here I am", which Moses uttered upon hearing God calling to him at "Horeb, the Mountain of God" (Exodus 3:1-4). God shares with Moses about the "crack", the sufferings of the Israelites; the Lord has heard their cry and seen their misery (Ex 3:7). Cohen, almost touching upon the cries of the Israelites, laments in his song, "A million candles burning for the help that never came". Some memories are indeed too close, too overwhelming for our minds to process. So we forget and become haunted by the latest trauma. The cries and misery pierce through the cracks, often forgotten, with the most recent making all things darker and darker. But Cohen reminds us of the need to move from memory to hope by uttering, "Hineni, hineni, hineni, hineni, I'm ready, my lord".

The Lord is ready to draw out the secret innocence of our being, that initial innocence where we flow from the hands of God into our Mother's womb. Here we become reborn (Cf. Jn 3) to encounter God's Word. So in a similar way where Abram became Abraham, Sarai became Sarah, Jacob became Israel, and Jesus ben Joseph became the Christ, we can find that our vocation and mission lies in taking up the identity of becoming children of God (1 Jn 3:1), knowing the Father and the Father's forgiveness ... of being free of memories of humiliation and brokenness and moving into hope.

Together, both Jean Vanier and Leonard Cohen help us to understand that the healing voice of God resonates in our vulnerability and deep emotions. God's word, "You are precious, you are important, you have value," pours out of the crack, and becomes the very response to a haemorrhaging heart lamenting "You want it darker. Hineni, hineni, hineni, hineni, I'm ready, my lord'. The light of God, helping us to discover our initial innocence, shares a taste of joy and hope for the world to come. Here, we might begin to partake of a messianic moment – something almost Eucharistic – which orients our heart and mind towards the realisation that something new is occurring. Isaiah spoke of this when he writes: "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isa 43:18-19) Yes, God in Jesus the Christ is doing something ever new, calling us to

mission, to proclaim "I'm ready, my Lord" for "the Kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matt 10:7).