

Admiring our ancestors? sense of gratitude

by Mark Pavilons

I had to pick up trash bags on my way home from work the other day.

Green garbage bags.

I comment, under my breath, that I often feel like a pack mule, carrying out menial tasks, carrying cargo from there to here.

The banality of these chores is often mind-numbing.

I'm reminded these are, in fact, First World problems. And there's the crux of it all.

Yes, our ancestors likely endured similar chores, and theirs would involve fetching water from the well; hanging laundry on a line out back; or bringing home freshly caught fish for dinner. Glancing further back in time, important chores involved keeping the fire stoked; hunting; staying warm and ensuring an adequate food supply for the winter. Trying not to die was front of mind.

These were definitely out of necessity, out of survival and we rose to the challenge. Fight or flight; eat or starve; stay safe or become prey.

Human reality for millennia. But we persevered.

Maybe, if you think about it, not much has changed, other than the location, tools at our disposal, modern contrivances to help us do our work easier and more efficiently.

We still fight to survive the economic climate and disparity; the harsh realities of the haves and have-nots; maintaining our mental health. All are a bit of a challenge these days. Are we in danger of being trampled by a woolly mammoth? No. But we maybe stomped on by Big Brother, Big Government and Big Banks.

Still, our brethren suffer, in arid lands, in refugee camps and in ruins that were once cities. Food, water and shelter are still the most important things to them.

We know about these things, even see them on the news and all we can do is raise an eyebrow from the comfort of our leather recliners.

We like to think we're at the top of the heap as an intelligent species.

Would an intelligent species allow its brothers and sisters to wallow in poverty, die from curable diseases, or face death simply due to their circumstances or geographic location? We say no, yet where is the action, the mandate, the progress?

My patience for the mundane and trivial is wearing thin these days, largely because I'm enduring a cancer journey with an uncertain future.

And yet I still have to take out the trash, recycling and organics. I still have household duties.

Not glamorous, high-profile or tasks befitting my certain set of skills.

But for survival? No. That comes from within, in discussions with myself, my consciousness and my God.

All through human existence on this tiny planet, our ancestors have turned to unseen powers, deities, 'star people,' supreme beings and gods of all shapes and sizes. They sought their guidance, approval, help and comfort.

Despite our lack of technology eons ago, we believed and looked to the stars for reason, for answers.

Our ancestors built impressive temples, obelisks, statues and monuments, perhaps to show their worthiness, or out of respect.

Our forefathers and mothers spent considerable time and effort appeasing the gods. To what end?

We don't know.

But what we can surmise is their belief system was rock-solid and unshakable. It was key to who they were.

Did they know something we don't?

Experts say much of our ancestors' mathematical and engineering prowess was way beyond their time. Ancient structures - some built in the middle of the jungles or top of mountains - defy today's logic and construction methods.

To our ancestors, it simply had to be done, so they did.

If we only retained that ideology and adopted that sense of purpose and determination to this day.

There are many things these days that have to be done.

Our distant cousins would gather thousands of their brothers and sisters and construct an unbelievable, multi-storey temple, elaborate carvings, staircases, rooms and manicured grounds. Were these a gesture, a physical depiction of their unwavering belief?

Today's archeologists struggle to understand and find answers. We can't comprehend the strength and coordination necessary to create such monoliths. Their sheer size and perfection escapes us.

Maybe what we fail to grasp, given modern bias, is something rather simple. Perhaps our primitive ancestors were just returning the favour.

They were given life and this beautiful land - treasures beyond any bounty. The least they could do was show their appreciation and love.

Where's our thanks for life and bounty bestowed upon us? How often do we get down on our knees and express thanks for experiencing the miracles that abound all around us?

Where are our temples, statues, monuments and testimonies to the Almighty?

We marvel at ancient wonders. Anyone would be awe-struck standing before the 112-metre-tall statue of Shiva, at Vishwas Swaroopam, India. Or looking at the 71-metre-high Leshan Giant Buddha or Colossus of Rhodes. And who isn't familiar with the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue of Jesus in Rio de Janeiro?

Wonders all. Not just testaments to human ingenuity, but our faith, our inner momentum.

My friends, today our symbols are reviewed, scrutinized and 'politically corrected' so as not to offend.

What do you think the response would be if someone suggested such creations at Queen's Park or Parliament Hill?

And yet, I can see the U.S. leader commissioning a statue in his image, dethroning Lincoln in Washington.

What have we become?

We are free to believe in what we wish. But I think one common thread in all forms of spirituality is giving thanks.

Maybe we don't need to construct modern monoliths to express our gratitude. But grace and recognition would be nice now and then.