

We must work together to forge a new mentality

by Mark Pavilons

?And the men who hold high places

Must be the ones who start

To mold a new reality

Closer to the heart.?

What Canadian band Rush was getting at here is that everyone ??he blacksmith, artists, philosophers and ploughmen ??ll have to work together to forge and sow a new mentality.

We have to do better.

Yes, the politicians and government officials are indeed the ones in high places who can make a difference.

They can broker peace instead of funding conflict. They can end strife instead of fueling hunger.

There are two major conflicts that have been going on far too long and taking too large a toll to ignore. People are dying every day, in battles over land and borders.

The ploughmen sure didn't ask for this, nor did they deserve it. The artists, and works of art being destroyed in Ukraine, are indeed hindering our creativity.

We witnessed the destruction nightly on the TV newscasts but now it seems, the hard-hitting reality has been relegated to the backburner. These wonton acts of aggression, destruction and death are no longer front and centre of our worries.

And that, my friends, is sad. No, it's tragic.

Many newcomers to this great country of ours have horror stories to share ? of conflict, pain and suffering, famine and yes, war.

We welcome them, and yet know so little about their circumstances, heritage, culture, history or current events. And that, too, is sad.

There's really no reason we can't all educate ourselves on the goings-on of other countries and their people. The world is so rich ?? mosaic of people ? that we must take it upon ourselves to learn and understand.

Yes, I?get it. We Canadians are currently caught up in a sluggish economy. Some are struggling to make ends meet and record numbers are using food banks. Our young continue to work, with thoughts of home ownership slipping further out of reach. We try to make sense of the carbon tax and look for bargains in a world of rising costs of consumer goods.

We opt for KD instead of burgers.

I consider myself and my family lucky and blessed. And yet, I'm quite familiar with lines of credit, overdraft and credit card interest charges.

I?try to make my family members smile and laugh, while wrestling with my own inner demons.

I lose sleep but make up for it when one of my puppies asks for a belly rub. I laugh until I cry, embracing those moments when the air is light.

Just like our families, our society and our entire world relies not on fossil fuels but on humanity.

The combustible material is love, joy and compassion.

We all know this. Yes, I understand that it's hard, sometimes, to keep a brave face but it's increasingly necessary. We have to constantly work at forging a new mentality.

And this work, this daily effort, spreads beyond the confines of our comfy homes. It filters through society and ideally, thoughts become actions and actions heal, save, feed and create hope.

A lot of people feel somewhat ineffective in our large bureaucracies and democratic labyrinth of ministries, agencies and on-the-ground aid forces.

We are deflated by red tape, time-consuming procedures and protocols. We are disheartened by a lack of political will and focus.

But that shouldn't change who we are at heart, and why we're here. It shouldn't alter our path, our search for justice, equality and inclusion. It shouldn't affect what's right.

There have been many occasions lately where my head is hanging low as I run my errands, take care of loose ends, and tend to the unpalatable. But I still open doors, greet people with a smile and extend my thanks. In the back of my head, I still hope that those in high places will see the light and make the right decisions.

I have dealt with a seller on eBay from the Ukraine for almost two years now. He's told me of his struggles and how his family had to move away to Poland for safety. He hasn't seen them at all during that time.

He does whatever he can to make a living and ensure his family's safety.

We have no idea of his predicament or what he's been through. I support him by buying his products when I can afford them. He's not alone and joined by thousands of his fellow citizens, living through this unprovoked conflict with Russia.

When I think of this conflict, and the one in the Middle East, images of crumbling cities come to mind. Entire city blocks are gone, leaving mountains of rubble behind. Market places and town squares have been replaced by dust, debris and death.

This is not how people should live. This isn't what the Almighty had in mind.

And yet, modern day philosophers and musicians go about their daily routines, redecorating the interiors of their bubbles.

We think of the colour trends for the summer of 2024; what to add to the cottage, and which back yard accessories to buy.

We clean our barbecues that will soon grill our steaks and sausages. We plan gatherings and outdoor events.

We should do these things with a bit of humility, and give thanks for what we enjoy. Those words of prayer around the Sunday dinner table should ring loud and clear.

As we embrace our family ties and have the opportunity to wine and dine, our thoughts could also turn to others. Our brothers and sisters, thousands of miles away, deserve no less.

Maybe, in between corn hole games, we can impress upon those in "high places" to be responsible and accountable. Not just to us, but to humankind.