

Start of Uni Year:

You do not need me to tell you that we live in a changing world.

When I studied overseas, I recall the Professor of Christian Education saying something like, “You have come here to enjoy holy leisure and to explore and to grow as a person.

For me tertiary education was a time to explore, to grow and to be challenged. I certainly thanked my God for the opportunities that afforded me.

That was 25 years ago this year.

As I said life changes and as I understand tertiary education today the situation has changed. More and more students have to undertake part time work as well as full time study.

More is being expected of academics in terms of teaching and research output and the list can do on.

Yes tertiary education has changed immensely since I first commenced at Teachers’ College nearly forty years ago.

One of things my lecturers often said was to question. Ask questions. Seek for the answers.

While there has been great change in tertiary education for me there are certain givens.

One is the importance of questions.

I grew up in a day and age when you were young you did not ask questions. I have told the story before, but I recall asking my clergyperson a question and later on my Grandma saying, “William” (and I knew I was in trouble then because I was not Bill) “Rays do not display their ignorance in public”.

Questions, they are important.

My father use to say to us as children, “If you ask the question, you have to live with the answer”.

Questions, whether we ask them or they are asked of us can challenge us.

In the account we heard from the Christian Scriptures of Jesus being in the Temple we note three key verbs, sitting listening and asking or questioning.

I hope that at the commencement of this academic year we will ask questions. Not only do we ask questions but we seek answers. The answers may not be the answers we were either hoping for expecting but we are able to deal with the new information, the new insights, the new possibilities.

I don't know if I am the only one here, but there have been times when I would have loved to ask a question at a meeting or during the lecturer, but I was not sure how to frame the question.

Questions can be hard work and note in this account Jesus sat and he listened. Jesus sat and listened and then asked.

Yes University life is full of time lines, for students, assignments due in or there is preparation for this exam or oral. For the staff lectures or teaching to be prepared, this research to be undertaken and the list can go on.

In the midst of it all, the hurly burly of student and academic or support staff life I hope that you are able to be like Jesus and make time (even though his parents did not know where he was etc.) to sit down and listen, to ask questions and to explore the answers.

I recall feeling a little proud when I heard I had passed a certain Diploma qualification. I shared it with a person and I have never forgotten his reply. It went something like this, "That's good. The qualification just says you can be let lose on the public, but it is what you do with it that counts."

Questions are important whether we are an undergraduate or a post graduate person.

Questions help us not only to learn, but they can be an important aspect of our growth.

My friends may we move into this new Academic Year using questions to assist us in our academic and personal, with the express purpose that people will not question our intellectual or personal integrity.

Thank you.