

WHAT IS TOWN MEETING ?

Grace be unto you and peace. From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

It was winter and the festival of dedication was being held in Jerusalem and Jesus was walking in the temple precincts in Solomon's cloister, The Jews gathered round him and asked, "How long would you keep us in this suspense?" If you're the Messiah, say so plainly." "I've told you," Jesus said. "But you do not believe. My deeds, done in my Father's name, are my credentials." Once again, the Jews picked up stones to stone him. At this, he said to them, "I've set before you many good deeds done by my Father's power. For which of those would you now stone me?" The Jews replied, "We're not going to stone you for any good deed. Rather for your blasphemy. You, a mere man, claim to be of God." Jesus answered, "This I say, it is written in your own law 'I the Lord saith you are gods.' Those who are called gods to whom the word of God is dedicated and the scripture, as you know, cannot be set aside. Why then, do you charge me with blasphemy? Because I, consecrated and sent into this world by the Father have said 'I am God's son.' If I am not acting as my Father would, do not believe in me. But, if I am, then accept the evidence of my own deeds, even if you do not believe in me." This provoked them once more to attempt to seize him.

The Town Meeting has set me thinking. From time to time, I like to boast that I am a very practical man, but when you come right down to it, I am a contemplative at the slightest provocation, and Town Meeting is a mighty provocation. I was trying to think last night what Town Meeting has provoked me to think about. I found that it has occasioned thinking about the Xavier principle, about transrationality, about guidelines of revolutionaries, and about the intellectual frame of the whole Church. I want to think out loud this morning on these matters.

For those of you not up on all of our jargon, Xavierism came out of the awareness that Xavier had to take Rome with him when he went to the Orient. If Xavier had to wait for Rome to make a decision, he would have been in bad shape. It took two years for a ship to reach Rome, if it made it at all. Xavier would have to wait another two years for the ship to return, plus whatever length of time it took for Rome to make up its mind. That would be hard to put a price tag on, and it left Xavier to be the Movement where he was. That is what we mean by Xavierism.

Now, the Town Meeting is the Movement and for me, it is dramatizing as never before, the fact that wherever we are, we are on our own. Wherever you are is the world, and the whole world. It is with some sentiment that I recall how some years ago, this group of people stumbled upon one another and how together, we built a global net. Oh my, the thinking that it took, the discipline, the back-breaking work and the indescribable anxiety that it took! I am on my eleventh nervous breakdown now, and I think some of you are ahead of me. I would not want to go through that again.

It was a great time when we first sent out the houses. We have been accused of building an organization rather than doing the mission, serving the world. When people made that accusation, there was not much you could say. Secretly you could say that if you want to continue in liberalism which makes 'doing something' synonymous with 'having an idea about doing something', then you do not have to work tactically and you do not have to build a framework of action in order to act.

So we sweated, and we have the global net now. It is literally worldwide in the sense that if we had the troops, we could have houses in all of the areas excluding only the USSR and China. We know how to do it, the world is ready for it and the Church is ready for it. Now, with Town Meeting and Social Demonstration, the time has come. In the midst of the overwhelming anxiety and pressure that all of us feel, I am deeply excited that now this network all at once can be turned to the service of humanity and the service of the Church. This is a part of my joy unspeakable. But with that comes the intensification of Xavierism.

I have been thinking that the luxury we have had of working all together is now gone. Though we will march together, we will never be able to sit down and think together, sweat together, fear together, plan together and pray together as we have in the past. That brought us to this hour and, of course, built that network. It is as if each one of the 102 installations (as my brother likes to call our houses) has to replicate what we did together.

This has to do with Xavierism. Wherever your installation is, or wherever you are as your installation, that is the whole globe. It does not make any difference whether it is Billings, Montana or Hong Kong or Lagos. That is Xavierism. There is not any bottom. You have to build for service of the world. I am trying to say that you might as well not try to communicate with Rome. If you have not taken the Movement with you. . . this ought to cut down on our telephone bills.

We have talked a lot about Xavierism, yet, I am not sure I really saw it going on during this last trip. Town Meeting, I believe, is not going to happen without this disposition, this posture that wherever I am, whether it be an installation that covers six counties, six states or six countries, that is the world. The interesting part of this posture is that you can serve that hunk of space until the day you die and still not have eliminated all of the suffering there.

The second thing that I have been thinking about is transrationality. When you get old, sometimes with a touch of delight; at other times with horrifying despair, you try to identify with your younger colleagues. How in the world are you going to do those Town Meetings? When I think about that, it is in despair that I empathetically cling to you. It is at that moment that I know, I just know, that if you are not transrational you are lost.

I attended a get-together with some of our colleagues from across the Atlantic, and while I was there, a very young female who has been around here a long time, came up to me. I think she had had a couple of Bloody Marrings. Anyway she said, "I want to tell you this personally." Then she said, "I am going to leave the Order," in the tone of voice that said she either expected me to fall all over her and beg her to stay or collapse into a heap of shaking palsy. I think she forgot what a hardened old character I am. I turned to her and said what I said to my sons, "I couldn't care less." I am quite sure the Lord is refining us down.

What I mean by the transrational is this: if you do not believe the six fundamental principles of the 5th City Model, that social change is occasioned by symbol and not by hard work, then you are going to call Rome, or get the two suitcases, because you are going to collapse. I know that you have thought about that for years, but I wonder how many of you really believe it.

I would not even begin the effort to do Town Meeting anywhere if I did not first build the most unbelievable chart you ever saw. I would put it up where I could not avoid looking at it until it actually became an after-image that my eyes could see even when it is not there. It would stay a long time, until it was branded on the inside of my forehead, burned into my imagination; that is where my pictures feel like they are.

That first chart would be high abstraction, and when I talk about symbols, I mean high abstraction. All these thick books which expound upon what you do now and what you do next have always seemed ridiculous to me. Maybe I would like them, if I believed that the people who write them really believe that the symbols actually occasion social change, and that the abstract model is what does the task effectively.

That chart would look like this (and forgive me if I just talk about Town Meeting in the United States for a minute): Down at the bottom of it, in little tiny letters, it would have "5000 Town Meetings in the United States." I would have above that, in slightly bigger letters, something like "1,296 Town Meetings per area." Above that, in slightly larger letters, I would have "216 Town Meetings per region." And then, just above that in even larger letters, I would have "36 Town Meetings per Metro." Above that in bigger letters yet, I would put "6 Town Meetings per polis" and then in huge letters up at the top, I would have "1 Town Meeting per micro-polis.

If you do not have that, I would be willing to bet my meager stipend that you are not going to make it. You can do a better chart than that, but it has to be that now, for instance, that tells me that actually, to do one Metro, I need only make 6 calls; one every four months, one each third of a year. Now, you do not know how much "guts" I have and how tall I can stand when I see that over a two year period, I have only 6 calls to make. I have done that much in a day! If you think I am trying to pump you up, you do not even know me. I am telling you how to operate in transrationality. I am telling why, even though I have had eleven nervous breakdowns, I still stand up here fat and happy. I operate transrationally.

Now, you understand that it is not even that bad. Of course, with every one of those calls, I have to get 6 Town Meetings, but I am not out to get 6 Town Meetings. I am out to get somebody who will do 6, and all I am interested in is doing one. If I do one and it works, you can be sure that those other 5 are going to fall like dominos. Do you get that picture? What I am talking a about is not unreality; it is sheer naked reality.

This has to do with Hope. I came home recently after I had been fooling with Hope and found that somebody got Hope all twisted around. They thought that once you hope, then you love the world. No! Hope cometh only when you love the world. They had turned hope into a functional category. Hope is not functional, not in any way at all. Hope is Hope. I mean the Hope beyond hope. If you want to put it in the realm of motivity and really, you have to get out of this world to do it, you see as Hope has appeared to me, I am not motivated to do anything. I am motivity. Do you see that? I am like the greyhounds chasing rabbits.

When I am living in Hope, you put any jackrabbit in front of me, and you watch out. Does that communicate to you? I am motivity; only, you see, I am not motivity. The Hope beyond hope is motivity. When you translate that into something a bit closer to how you actually operate, you can see that when you hope you cannot avoid operating transrationally. Do you grasp what I am talking about? This turns transrational operation, or living the concept that symbols change the world, into a spiritual reality. If you operate transrationally, you can do what is necessary in Town Meeting with one arm tied behind your back. If you try to operate otherwise, God only knows what is going to happen.

I really believe in our first idea. It was to have 10,000 Town Meetings in this nation with 200 people in each. This would be 1% of the population, or 2 million people. We revised the total to 5,000 because we simply chickened out. As I recollect, I led the pack. We thought that if we cut the number in half, we could find enough guns to do 5,000. That is true. Now, we are going to do 10,000, only we are not going to do it. The Lord is going to do it. We are not going to do 5,000. The Lord is going to do it. The 5,000 are going to snowball to 10,000.

My point is that when you think transrationally, the 1,000 you do will do the 5,000. Looking at this another way, the one Town Meeting that I am responsible for in a polis is going to do the other 5, and then it will snowball into still another 5. But you do not know that it will stop there. I do not care if it stops. I do not even care if we only do 1,000. How could you march into the future if your ability to stand is wrapped around any one of your goals? That detachment is there.

Then I would have some other symbols if I was going to work this way. One would be a chart listing the six Polises I had to visit over a period of two years. Then I would list the places that I would have Town Meetings. . six under each one. Now, likely those Town Meetings are not going to happen where I put them, but if you do not put them there, you are lost. That is, a revolutionary has to do his total revolution before he starts, knowing that when the revolution happens, it will not be the revolution that he put out there for himself or anybody else. But, if he does not do that, there will be no revolution. That is what I am trying to say.

Now, I do not know much about polises and this kind of thing. But if Peoria out here is a Polis, then you know that there are some little villages all around Peoria which are a part of the Polis that we call Peoria. Now suppose that I walk into downtown Peoria and find on my call only people who will not do anything at all. I do not stay around there for three or four days. I receive the injunction of the Lord Jesus Christ to kick my heels to get rid of that dust, and go on to the next town down the road. Do you hear what I am saying? You are the victim of nothing, when you think transrationally, and the charts make that possible.

Then of course, I would do what you are going to work on this week. I would build myself a circuit. Now mind you I have only six calls to make over two years. But I have to know exactly where I am going to go when, I mean like iron, though it may not happen this way at all. Who knows, I may only make one call and find somebody like the Junior Chamber of Commerce that is going to do it in all of my Micro-polises, but you have your circuit chart clearly before you. Without that, you are lost. Do you remember in 5th City the clover leaf part that we always had in the beginning on the back of the rational chart? This is what we were fooling with. And, you have to have your forces. Boy, I would have those located. With every one of these Micro-polises I would have a name.

In the early days, (I think some of you young ones got tired of doing it), when we "gridded the world", we put a name in every little Ada, Ohio and when we did not have any grads there, we just put a name like Henry Jones. And we used to have fusses, because there would be some creep who went through a course and he was the only one in Ada, and some one would not put down his name because he was a creep. Well, I tell you that if all you have in Ada is a creep, he is in charge of the Movement in Ada. I am getting into revolutionary principles, really. We made some of the craziest bungles overseas precisely because we thought some guy who rubbed us the wrong way would never make a Movement man. Well, if we had done that universally across the Movement, there would be few of us sitting here. This is where those Guardians will be moving. Do you notice, you do not have to have a course to be a Guardian? These Guardians come, and they have never heard of you, but you find they know more about RS-I and CS-I. Only you academic people do not believe what I am saying. They know more about Hope and they know more about the Dark Night of the Soul than you and I do frequently. I would get myself a Guardian and if it were the banker that I just met yesterday and could not think of anybody else for Ada, Ohio, he would be my man. You used names on a sheet of paper.

And then I would deal with the women. In a lecture I used to give, (I think it was in CS-I) we ripped into suburbia and in the part where we took the woman to pieces, I think we worked hardest on the man. But there are those lazy, lotus-blossom kittens sitting out there all day long without a thing to do, day after

day, inventing clubs to go to that had no meaning but were killing time, the one precious thing that God gave them. Why, they are a hidden army. Do you see what I mean? I tell you I would take one woman to ten men if I wanted a Town Meeting to come off. They are sitting out there by the dozens doing nothing, and down in their soul is a yearning for engagement that you never would even dream of. You use what we already ought to have going anyway and that is your Metro Cadre.

The last kind of broad symbolism that I would have up before me until it was branded inside my being would be the timeline. I would set the dates for all of these, and I mean all of them. If I were responsible for this Metro I have them all listed and know exactly when I would have each Town Meeting. The transrational spirit man cares about winning the war! Effectivity, not efficiency. He is after the task, not his model, though the model does the task.

Now let's rehearse some revolutionary principles, though I have already gotten into those a bit. One thing you have to bear in mind is that the revolutionary- operates geographically. I laugh at this business of trying to get population mixed in. I understand that Mao Tse Tung said that if you effectively impact one percent of the population, of the people, then you have done a revolution. I like that. But if that was all that he had said about it, he'd be wrong. Rather, you would have to say, "Now, Mr. Mao, if you had said when you impact 1% of the people rationally distributed throughout your country or the arena in which you would work, then I see." Can you imagine how little you would have touched this country if you had 2 million people in New York City? You would not have done the revolution; not unless you went to Billings, not unless you went to White Deer, Texas, not unless you went to Ada, Oklahoma, with a Town Meeting. You have to think geographically. And if anybody around here tries to push you to think population-wise, I would get cotton in my ears before you can count to 10. It is nonsense to have 200 Town Meetings in Chicago just because it has a lot of people.

Now granted , we had a lot of fun in Washington and Chicago just putting up balloons to see how much the market would bear. But one must think geographically. I believe, you need six Town Meetings in New York City, one each for the Micro-polises you have there. Period. You have one prior criteria and that is geography. And we are doing it on our terms, not on somebody else's terms. You cannot do a revolution on somebody else's terms. You have the grid of your Areas, your Regions, your Metros, your Polises, your Micro-polises, to operate with, and if you do not you are lost. This is the way we used to put it, as you remember. We are not out there with a rifle when we operate, we are out there with a shotgun. A revolutionary uses a shotgun.

That brings us to the next principle. A revolutionary does the whole revolution all at once. Somebody irritated me the other day by saying that Canadians think evolutionarily. Well, yes, so does everybody else. But, a revolutionary thinks in terms of revolution. When you think in evolution you do this little job, and tomorrow you go and do yourself another little job. There is no relationship between the first job and that last one, and pretty soon you are dead.

A revolutionary takes his shotgun and he hits the whole target all at once. That is why if it turned out that I had to make six calls in two years, I would make them the first week. Then if anything went wrong, I would have a lot of time to keep those plates spinning. I am talking to you about a guy who means to do what he says he is going to do. I am sick and tired of failure mentality, and you do not need to wait until you see a guy fail before you know he has a failure mentality--you just watch how he begins. He does not mean to win. I am really almost back to Xavierism.

Then you have to keep out of the way of snowballing. Once a pharisee gets his model up, he takes his model seriously. You watch. You keep out of the way of snowballing. You have to let a revolution go when it gets started. If you look back through your own history, time and time again, things that we did

not dream of happened and you let them go, and they made it. They put us down the road. If something begins to go, let it go. Now, you have your model there so that you can be sure that snowball is going somewhere. You are not out to just have activity. That never changes anything. But if it is moving in terms of your target, you let it go.

Another thing that has bothered me a little bit is some budgets I have seen. A great deal of time and effort went into figuring out that a Town Meeting on the local level would cost \$1,000. Four hundred dollars of that is to be used locally to get it going, six hundred dollars to pay for the cost of it--the research, the travel and the material that has to be presented. Now, I am quite well aware of the fact that we can set up a budget for \$2,500 and can make it legitimate. I would like the world to see that we are not out after money. I said so many times in Washington that we do not want money, publicity, and we do not want credit for the Social Demonstration. And you know something? I could not live with myself if I could not look the world in the eye and say "We are not after money, we are not after notoriety, we are not after credit."

You would not want to go on and say to them that our reward is glorious, because you could not even describe it to them. Our reward is in heaven. I can demythologize that, if you do not trust me with those ancient symbols. I can put it in the most secular language you ever heard. I know something about the joy unspeakable. I know something about the peace that is not understandable. I know something about certitude that is incredible. How are you going to explain that? You JUST tell them, we are not after money, we are not after fame, we are not after reward. If I were interested in doing this and not interested in getting rich, I would want to keep this as low as possible. I want people to say to me every time, "My God, man, how in the world could you do it at a cost like that?" I would like everyone in the world to say that to me. I am interested in selling this product, not selling it for money, but selling it for the sake of what is going to happen in history.

One revolutionary principle is that you never think about money. Now if you are going to do a revolution, you have to be sure that the finance office and the Development office are in good health. That is just foundational. But they are not primal values. . .the mission, the mission. Now, if you get going and discover that we are all going down the drain at \$1,000, well fine, let's raise it up to \$1,050 or \$1,100. When the Town Meeting is over, some of you silly ones who do not put ICA on every piece of literature are going, to regret it. I want this country to know about ICA when this is over. I do not want them to know us as people who made a bundle off of this; or as people who were out for notoriety. I want them to know us in such a fashion that they would trust us to be of service in whatever way the future needs. I would like for them to trust us as I believe God's people must be trusted. Even when they crucify you, they have to know who they are crucifying--for their sake, not for ours.

I was going to talk a bit on the reflective life of the Church. I will say a word and then stop. Town Meeting made me think. I have said, as undoubtedly you have in the last few years, that this unbelievable theological revolution which has happened in our time (when you get perspective) was but the completion of the Protestant Reformation. That revolution made me and excites me. But I am convinced that it is but the tail-end of a movement that went over several hundreds of years. The magnitudinal theological revolution, and I mean by that the reflective frame of the Church has not happened yet, but is about to. Some of you young ones, I believe, will live to see it and participate in it. As a matter of fact, I tell some of my colleagues that in many ways they are the best prepared people in the world to participate in it. I do not know what it is going to look like, but you and I can do some guessing.

You see, when this Christ happening happened, it was in the context of the Persian concept of the word which got into the Hebraic. And, as you know (at least those of you who have studied theology), that is quite a different concept of the logos, and yet it is the Word. The Word is reality. The Word "be's"

reality. But fundamentally, the Church did its thinking (and it had to think in some context) in the context of the Greek world-view. And there it ran up against logos. Now very subtly through the years, the dogma became more than simply a container of this happening which preserved it until it happened again. And dogma, doctrine, in that sense, in carrying the seed is absolutely crucial. And there has been no religious group ever without this, nor could there be ever a church without this. But the important thing is the word, for without it nothing happens. It is like some little atomic particle, which when it gets loose, it happens something.

Now, I am not talking about Christianity. I am talking about what people generally are going to do with religion, because what I am saying is as true of Hinduism as it is of Christianity, though you would have to come at it a different way. In our time, God has given us a world-view whereby we look at reality through the rubric of happenings or events, and the new theology is going to begin precisely there. Whatever language we use they are going to be talking about the Christ happening or the awakening happening. But the dogma is still hanging in there, way down in our emotional side. Even though we know the Christ happening is a happening, we are attached to the theological poetry that freighted the reality of that happening to us. In spite of all we know, the Christ happening becomes believing something about this or something about that. I suspect that in the new theology we are going to have a criteria relative to happenings.

Now this happening, which is the profound awakening, does it have to do with the all-in-all? Does it have to do with the fear and fascination of the presence of awe? Does it have to do with total new relationship, to the givenness. Of the only temporality that we know anything about? Do you see that that is something of a flip of the way the church of the centuries has been thinking about the Christ word?

I have talked with people who have gone to Town Meeting and when they tell me about Town Meeting they tell about what has happened to them, and what has happened to a group of people. And when my spiritual ears are listening, I know something like this is going on in there. Something exploded in people's lives. As I sit here as an intentional, self-conscious participant in the historical people of God, I remember why our father said that He was Lord of the world. Do you hear what I am saying?

You and I know that across the sweep of history of our time there is flowing, well. . . what would you call it? a resurgence of the spirit? a revival of the spirit? But it is there. And you remember that the people of God never start from the top down. When you think of the Church you tend to think of the architectonic structure, but the Church is the "Last Fat Lady". The Church is the local and these things come later and they are necessary, but we get them mixed up. The Church is where people are waking up to the fact that they have one glorious life to live with one glorious death to live and can authentically participate in creating the great journey of mankind. There is the People of God. What do you think Town Meeting is?

In the last century, they tell me people in the Church used to cry because most of the people in the world were lost. By the time you and I came along, that had been perverted into proselytism and all kinds of cruddy stuff. But when you sing that song about local men, "3 Billion people", when are you going to start crying at that?--that most of the people who get born and get died in this land and in all lands do not seem to have the slightest opportunity to become alive in the breakloose of consciousness and in opportunities to release their creativity in forging history itself. When are you going to care enough to just sometime shed a tear? I am trying to say what do you think Town Meeting is?

You know what I really wanted to do? I want to forget all about all of this plotting and planning on Town Meeting that you are going to do, and instead spend our time reading Rahner's The Shape of the Church to Come just to get a reading. And then we could look through him to our own insights; that is really

what I want to do. I told you I am a contemplative, not a man of action at all. Now, you know that new shape is coming. It is probably here, but none of us--Rahner or anybody else--really have got eyes to see it. What do you think Town Meeting is? Do I need to spell this out? I doubt it. I do not know what the shape of the Church is, but I know Town Meeting has to do with local man, and it has to do with local man probing into the profundity of life. And it has to do with local man working together for the well-being of all men.

I do not mean to be in a hurry about all of this, but I know that before some of you die, that there is going to be a brand new way for the Church to reflect upon the deep heritage that she has preserved through the years not in superficial dialogue, but in profound actional dialogue with sensitive people from all climes and within all creedal bodies.

Well, I have not made much of a speech, but I hope I have said that Town Meeting has occasioned again thinking about every one of us doing the world wherever we are; about the cruciality of transrational thinking; about a new resolution to cooperate only as a revolutionary with revolutionary strategies and tactics; and to somehow sense, even though we cannot see or understand clearly that we are participating in maybe the most astounding spiritual upheaval that time has ever known. And there is nothing religious about that.

-----Joseph W. Matthews
7/28/75