

5th City: A Sign of Hope

The 5th City Congress and "Decade of Miracles" Celebration, December 14 and 15, reminded us again that 5th City has become a symbol of hope around the world. This did not mean it was an easy ten years, for it was pain, suffering, riots that saw buildings razed, bedlam and terror. I'm sure at times, they thought nothing would happen, and everything would come to naught. But they kept at it, moving inch by inch. But to inch along for ten years, even though it is only an inch a day, one should cover miles by the end of ten years. But sometimes internally it does not seem to be so.

Nonetheless, the past ten years was a great decade of miracles, the greatest of which is that 5th City has become a symbol of hope. We have seen it in those places where 5th City has been self-consciously transplanted--in Mowanjum, in Oombulgurri for Aborigines and in Hong Kong, where refugees are stacked up on top of one another. Also some of the 5th City curriculum has been translated and is in use in Japan. In Pakistan, a doctor took a copy of our old yellow brochure on the Ecumenical Institute and went to the mountains, a place of tribal and ethnic turmoil and pinned the brochure onto the side of cardboard huts. He taught his brother, and others not so educated as he, what 5th City was all about, so that the community could change. Everywhere that RS-I has gone internationally, 5th City has become a symbol of hope. 5th City's second decade will be a symbol for the world as well.

When Guild members from Uptown 5 went to see the 5th City housing rehabilitation projects, they returned and said, "We went to 5th City to find out about housing, but even more important, we learned about the new humanness."

5th City has gone global--geosocial. Looking at the grid, the emphasis on geography is there, but December 15th, the completion of the celebration with Mayor Daley's presence, brought a whole new dimension. You can understand why the world is looking to 5th City for a sign of hope. The world does not look to places like Wilmette or Winnetka or Barrington or any other great suburb for a sign of hope. They might look on with envy, but not with hope. For hope, they look to 5th City, a model and demonstration sign of community reformulation. Probably eighty percent of them look to 5th City for hope because their world, like 5th City, is oppressed, and deprived. 5th City is coming alive, gives them hope, but what about the other twenty percent? They are what December 15th was all about.

Listen to the last two paragraphs of Mayor Daley's address to 5th City on that day:

Everyone here has accomplished much, that is why I say, we thank the Lord and thank you for this fine day. And hope. . . with the help of God, that what you are doing here will be emulated, and imitated and repeated in every neighborhood in our city. Because when we improve the neighborhood and we improve the communities, then we improve the city. And there's no reason why we can't do what you've done, in ten years, in the next ten years to remove every slum and every blight in Chicago and

to have a decent home and a decent school and a decent park and decent medical attention, to be of service to all people in our great city.

Congratulations again from a grateful city to fine, hard-working people who had a dream. And Dean, may we dream and have visions because a country without vision and without dreams would be lost. And I think, as you said, no time in the history of our country do we need wholesome and good dreams of what the future should be of our cities and our country than we need today. Good luck to all of you, and thanks again from a grateful city to each and every one of you.

Mayor Daley noticed the sign. The Mayor and the establishment are now looking to 5th City with hope. This means that 5th City is, so to speak, imaginably controlling the Mayor, or the Establishment. This was not something emotional that happened to the Mayor, although he was emotionally grabbed, to be sure. When one of our staff members visited his office recently, Daley's press secretary told him that Mayor Daley had called December 15th the most extraordinary thing that has happened on the West Side since the riots. 5th City has gained imaginal control over Mayor Daley. It has become his image of possibility for the communities of the city for tomorrow.

Globality is not only geographical, and we have demonstrated this in our geosocial grids, and our geosocial models, globality also comes down on the social pole of the geosocial. Now in this sense, the 5th City model is becoming global for the first time. Globality is permeation as well as encompassing. It is social as well as geographical. It takes revolutionary strategy. Globality is not sitting and reflecting, or just seeing that the world is one. Globality is a radical alteration of your life. It is a revolutionary strategy that YOU embody, that you BE in relationship to the rest of the world. Globality is never benign acceptance. It is active encounter. It is dialogue with life. It is what is meant by thrusting into life and having it thrust back at you back and forth. We are beginning to experience this existentially, as well as in our missional direction.

To put it another way, when we imaginably redo something, we have to redo a person's montage radically so that in his being, he can see ontological possibility afresh. That is what we must do in our every thrust.

What does it mean to be a global people? What does it mean to have a revolutionary strategy? It means to begin genuinely altering the montage in people's lives so that ontological, new possibility becomes real for them.

Then, what does the world need to know about community reformulation? Take Mayor Daley's remark to his press secretary. I imagine in the riots, he saw the whole of Chicago going up in flames, all its social structures disintegrating. To put it theologically, he saw the face of God, utter Mystery. Then, he returned to the West Side and saw a group of people who have decided to live before that Mystery and create their community. And, in one sense, the Mayor wept, as we weep when we are touched to the bottom of our beings. We know that external images are grounded in the subjective grasping of them. One must always break through transparently to stand before the Last Reality. But to stand before the Last Reality can burn you to a crisp if you decide not to be present. Grasping the process that destroys and recreates is what allows everything to become new, everything to be recreated and, sociologically, this is the reason we are in 5th City.

In every social structure, one must see through to the Nothingness, to the Abyss, the Mystery. You create in relationship to the Awe. That is why globality is not just a relationship to geography, but transparent sociality. Recreation takes place from the standpoint of transparent sociality and today that means we work within the Establishment, honoring its structures. For once you live before the Mystery, it becomes clear that every structure is finally worthless rubbish. There is not need to justify yourself by beating some structure to death. You receive it and honor it, knowing full well it can be and will be radically changed or mutated, tomorrow. 5th City is hope because it is the sign of a practical vision of this, grasped and demonstrated.

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