

THE VICTORIOUS CHURCH

When I was asked to give a report on the vision of the new Church, the first image that came to my mind is that of churches all over the world with towers on each side. In those towers are bells and the bells are ringing; the bells toll like the sway of the human body, announcing the rhythm of man's journey - life and death, life and death. The bells are ringing in the midst of society, in the life struggle of all mankind.

I see the vision of the Church as that of a united body of men, men of wisdom who study and do research, men who care with the love that only comes from God as exemplified in Jesus the Christ, men with longing and men who dare to risk their lives on behalf of the struggle of all mankind.

We used the image of the pilgrim on the way during Ecclesiola. Mankind is on the journey. The Church is the pilgrim that travels light in the journey. It dares to get rid of excess luggage that may move into the future. It dares to build the world that the Creator brought into being - the universe where nature serves all of mankind, and all men serve his Creator; the universe in which men join in the creative process, and in so doing, finds the meaning and essence of himself in the being of God.

I see the Church struggling without ceasing, working with no end in view, caring and loving with no restraint. The Church walks the ascending path that is narrow, and as it ascends, it widens the path that others may follow.

The Church is the body of men who are aware and conscious that life is never a complete state, it is always a process, an ever-becoming search for the lost equilibrium of the universe, where the attainment of good is to add meaning and does not constitute an end. To possess, to acquire and to collect is foreign in the Church's vocabulary. The Church as it struggles thus will always find itself as a persecuted Church because the established powers of the world will not share in that struggle.

To do the task that belongs to others, and to be resigned and dole out meaningless charity to the struggle for existence of my fellow men will be obsolete and part of the past. For the new Church is a victorious warrior that strives for freedom - freedom to be, freedom to act, freedom to give one's self, freedom even to fail and learn from failures that it may finally be victorious, freedom to give away that freedom. The Church is the body that chooses to be ears that hear, eyes that see, bodies that embrace and souls and hearts that rejoice in the sorrow that comes with the radical awareness of the ascending path.

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The Church, my Church is at the center, is exposed, is one with creation and is the body that feels in its innermost being the change that has come upon our era, our age. It takes upon itself that change as it gives birth to the new in history. Comprehensive, yet rooted in the particular, it embraces the past, lives in the present, and claims the promise of the future.

As I look harder, I see the Church in small villages, with peasants and with workers, praying while they plant, worshipping while they harvest. They are Christians who battle to defeat hunger and exploitation. I see the Church in committees, classes, fiestas, and also mourning and crying at the completion of man's glorious life.

In this vision, I see the Church in the city dealing with multiple realities, transforming the impersonal and inhuman act of alienated education into a respect-full process of shaping the whole man. I see the Church dealing with youth and the roots of social problems, not just offering paliative remedies but challenging parents, husbands and wife, to accept and live in the realities of the world.

I see the Church dealing with society and its perversions and searching for a way to enable the powerless to appropriate their own powers, distributing responsibilities in its body that the world may witness the possibilities of the local men.

I see the Universal Church challenged and challenging the creation, the self-creation, of the new man and new woman who are free to love life itself in its fullness. I see the global Church striving to set men to be human - to be totally free, to be creative, to be eternal and transcendent in their life.

We are the conscious People of God set free. My friends, the next time you hear the church bells toll, they are ringing for you and me.

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