

THE TASK BEFORE US

And now the end has come, the ITI has finally come to an end. We dare not relax, there is a job to be done. "The task before us now if we would not perish is to shak off our ancient prejudices and to build the earth." The word "task" has an unpleasant ring in the ears of my countrymen who labour on the estates, for it means the cutting of a specified area of grass which must be completed before the day is over. If for some reason or other the job is not finished, the labourer has to return on the following day to finish it off. For my country, therefore, the word "task" is synonymous with such words as difficult, dirty and never ending.

For those of us graduating from the ITI, the word "task" could seem to have similar meanings. Under no pretence would I say that the "task" which lies before us is an easy one. Instead it will be difficult, because we will be called upon to do what in many cases seems to many to be impssible. It will be dirty because sometimes we may have to engage ourselves in projects which would literally dirty our hands and our clothing. It will be never ending because once we have truly committed ourselves to do the Lord's work, we are committed until death. This thought would surely frighten you - I share your fright. It's only natural that we should react in this way. The job we are called to do is to take a bold leap into the unknown, not knowing where it will all end - whether we are going to succeed or whether we are going to fail.

But courage, we are not alone in this. All over the world there are men and women who are already engaged in doing what we are called to do, that is, to build the earth. This is the task before us and we dare not shirk this responsibility. Stop, listen, hear what Kazantzakis says, "You have a great responsibility. You do not govern now only your own small, insignificant existence, you are a throw of the dice on which for a moment, the entire fate of your race is gambled.

Everything you do reverberates throughout a thousand destinies. As you walk, you cut open and create that river bed into which the stream of your descend nts shall enter and flow.

When you shake with fear, your terror branches into innumerable generations, and you degrade innumerable generations and you degrade innumerable souls souls before and behind us. When you rise to a valorous deed, all your race rises with you and turns valorous.

We come from different countries as far north as the Bahamas, as far south as Chile, as far west as Guatemala, and as far east as Guayana. And even though we come from different cultural backgrounds, and speak different languages, there is a common task in which we must share in, and that is to build our communities, our countries, by doing valorous deeds. Before doing these though, we must first "observe, judge, and weigh up the fact and then decide and act."

THE TASK BEFORE US (continued)

We are pioneers. Pioneers are people who go before. They are the ones who blaze new trails where none existed before. Pioneers change history. Like pioneers we are called upon to open new roads for humanity and to forever change history. This I would suggest is also part of our task.

It was yesterday we reported according to the different areas in which we found ourselves and many covenants were made during those reports. We pledged to go back to our several communities and countries and really start to do the work we are called to do. We spoke of establishing cadres, of reforming our communities and of reading a common book. These were covenants that were made. Covenants Covenants are not to be taken lightly. They are to be taken seriously. The Lord of history will hold us responsible if we break those covenants.

When I think of the way we lived together for those three weeks, doing common tasks singing and dancing together, I dream. I dream that one day all of the people of Latin America and the Caribbean will be one. How do I know this? The grid tells me so. When this happens, I hope we will all be alive to celebrate such an historical occasion in fiesta fashion. Yes, we will turn this part of the world upside down just as a handful of Christians did hundreds of years ago. We have a great responsibility - we must complete the task. The task of liberating our people, the people of the whole globe, so that they will lead a fuller life to the glory of God.

We will not fail, we must not fail, we shall not fail. Let these words of our friend, Kazantzakis, speak to each one of us: "Love responsibility, say: 'It is my duty, and mine alone to save the earth. If it is not saved, then I alone am to blame.'"

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