

RS-I by George Archer

This afternoon, as I was preparing this report, I looked out of my window and I saw some teenagers practicing mountain-climbing ... down into the valley, up to the top ... down into the valley, up to the top ... and I thought: this is what we are about, this is what we are doing; we are practicing mountain-climbing! We have come up to the top of the mountain (by the power of the unknown) and we have met here some friends -- Rudolph Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and H. Richard Niebuhr. I say, let's call them by their first names as they stand present and accountable -- Rudolph, Paul, Dietrich, and Richard -- in fact, anyone who puts on his pants one leg at a time must be a friend!

Rudolph ...

When we were studying Bultmann, I could not help but remember my friend Moe, who was with me at the University. Moe would say to me: "George, your God is too soft!" ... "My God is a Rock!" This friend Rudolph has told us what God is all about and has shown us a God who evokes our 'longing for the true and beautiful', our 'desire for love' ... our 'idea of duty' -- a God who is 'the voice of our conscience' which tells us how small and wretched we are and who 'drives the guilty to torment', ... yet 'forces man into life and drives him into care' -- 'the enigmatic power!' --- I guess you tried to be as polite as possible in your description of Him, but we did end up by saying some pretty terrible, dirty things about this God ...

And then we met our friend Tillich, -- Paul. I remember the story I heard about Paul, how he was called upon to give the benediction at a wedding and started off by saying: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Ghost."

Paul told us we are, or rather "you are accepted". Of course, you must remember that he also told us that we cannot do anything for it or about it. --

Before us now -- and for my Spanish speaking friends I shall state it as my friend Esteban has taught me to say: "mira el obstáculo que está plantado delante de tí" -- let us look at that wall, and we will do it the way John has taught us. And we are going to hit that brick wall, and we are going to rock back and forth, and we are going to hit that wall as hard as John hit it for us. -- So let us do it together. Look ahead of you, focus ahead, look at your obstacle, whatever it is, -- and when you hit it, do not move ... just feel the rhythm. --- One ... two ... three .. Bang -- Ready: one ... two ... three ... BANG ... Do not move ... Do not move, for your broken shattered body lies in the dust, and only by His grace can you be raised up again. Amen.

PEDAGOGY TUTORIAL by María Luísa Fernandez Rivera

During this past week we tried many interesting experiences. One of these is the work in the pedagogy group. Here we talked about the meaning of church today, the role of a priest in a real situation, and the words we would write on our own tombstone. These made us think about the mystery of life and particularly ours as Christians. Just sitting around the table with pastors, priests, nuns, teachers -- from the Caribbean, South America and Central America, was really something wonderful for me. We shared experiences with each other and we realized that each one is very concerned about the problems of life today. By sharing our experiences, we feel that we are not alone in this world.

Even though the English of some of us was inadequate, we have learned a lot from this kind of experience. We are able now to lead small groups of people to talk about community life problems, giving each one the opportunity to reflect on their own lives.

I thank the leaders of the pedagogy groups. They are doing a good job.

CS-I by Isabel Yanase

I am going to talk very briefly about what happened to us in the Cultural Revolution course this past week.

I wish to thank God for sending me to be here in the ITI, not to enter into a dream but to experience the deep reality of our lives. We are gathered from different places, to get to know each other, to exchange ideas and to take in new knowledge that permits us to change our own self. In my case, what has happened is that my images of the past and the present will never be the same again. When I go back to Peru, I will share the knowledge I have gained with my whole life.

SYMBOLIC REPORTSECCLESIOLA I - Celest ReinhartMembership

It is becoming a relaxing time of day. We come to our Ecclesiola at 6 P.M. after a tiresome day of study, seminars, questions and too much input. We come to a smaller group and we can share our human realities - our feelings, our fatigues on a more personal level.

We come to know "who belongs" - their names, their particular qualities or the uniqueness of each member, that which describes them as "special".

Having had this experience of "at-homeness" in my Ecclesiola, I can somehow go out fortified to the large crowd.

Informal Spirit Conversations

The conversations about the ordinary daily experiences of life, e.g. tragic figures, teachers, taught me that all of us have similar experiences - human and common to us all. Daily experiences of the past have made me the person I am today. They seemed insignificant then and often I did not realize that I was even in them - but are they insignificant? Who am I today? How am I influencing the future of others by my seemingly insignificant contacts with them?

Secular-Religious Exercises

The exercise on meditation: who is in your meditative council? Who helps you make decisions? Who would you like to have on your meditative council? The answers I truthfully give tell me a lot about the reality of my life.

The exercise on Poverty - the attachments and detachments I found within myself.

My reality is that I am a poor man. Do I live that bare reality or am I escaping that human reality. I am an effective person - an effective word-carrier - not because I have read a certain book with lots of good ideas, or because I have certain beliefs or a discipline but because I have seen and touched and felt life as a real, daily and concrete experience and I am honest with that reality.

In the Kazantzakis study, I find myself standing before the heaviness and the confusion of the day while a mystery within me cries: "Don't just stand there, do something!"

Reflections

Solitary Office

Secular images such as "music, candle, rock, readings" create a mood within me. In my solitude, I experience the demands that the world places upon me. I hear a call to be "serious" about the way that I as an individual respond to that demand.

My particular call and response reminds me of the basic qualities of the people of God who made a difference - that in the deeps, we stand alone. We are solitary.

Do I dare?

ECCLESIOLA II - Graciela de Herrera

Corporate life in Ecclesiola II has been most enriching and fruitful. Therefore, I would like to refer only one aspect of it.

Last Thursday we were doing some reading from a book written by a Greek man, first published in 1927. This man belonged to a different culture than most of us, and to a different part of our century. But when we opened the book, something unique happened.

The reading was more than a regular reading. It became alive in the voices of members of our Ecclesiola group. We heard the voice of the Mind with a human British accent, and the voice of the Heart through a dominican realtor. And it also seemed as if inside of us there was also a struggle taking place, our own heart and our own mind, related to the reality we face in our communities.

We could hear anguished cries of people inside a bus going down a precipice, the cries of a mother, the desperation of the oppressed indians in Latin America, and the never ending search of people aware of their tasks, that because they were deeply attached to what they considered their responsibility had found themselves alone and frustrated. People that had also experienced detachment from the boundaries of logical minds and fearful hearts.

A material object, a book, through the wonder of corporate living transmitted the essence of an existential problem that we face in relation to our historical backgrounds, but also in the present confrontation of everyday events.

Sitting there, we could also picture ourselves at the end of this event, back in our local communities, with the weight of a pending decision to take. The free decision to live in such a way that we could face death in order to be born to build.

As we were reflecting on every sequence of the meeting, the full realization of an immediate and personal crucial question encountered us. What is life all about? What does it mean to be human? We do not have the answer, though we know that through the invisible presence of other Ecclesiola members

ECCLESIOLA II (cont.)

that also struggle to find the way, we will be able to grasp and fulfill the transcendent uniqueness of our human existence.

Corporate life, we can anticipate, will help us to decide freely, and to find our part within the global society that is building the future.

ECCLESIOLA III - Cyril Ross

On Monday evening I entered Ecclesiola with joy. It was the end of a long and hard day. This illusion was soon dispelled. Ecclesiola was not the end, it was the beginning of our corporate life together.

Our arrival each evening to find all things prepared for our celebration was to remind us of our caring for each other.

At first, the game, which introduced the Spirit Conversations seemed childish but on reflection we realized that through them we began to know each other and also ourselves. Reflecting on the New Religious Mode exercise, we faced consciously our meditative councils and were challenged to test and question these councils. We were also led to consider where we stood in relationship with the things of this world.

We struggled with the description of the Spirit Journey.

Finally, in the solitary office we realized that after all is said and done--each one stands alone and accountable.

We have struggled during the past week--we have survived to struggle again during the present.

This report is made in the name of Jesus the Christ.

IMAGINAL EDUCATION - Ruth Palmer

Twelve days ago--Old year's day--New Year's eve as some call it--around this time we were getting ready to celebrate 1975.

We are now in 1975 - 12 days have gone, and seven of those twelve days were spent here at the ITI. Someone said this morning: it seems like seven years!

Well, seven days, seven new years, have gone by. They were days, years, of separation: separation from our beds at 5:00 A/M/ They were seven days, years, of pain: pain of a charted existence. They were seven days, years, of an experience of care and love. They were seven days, years, of death and life.

This evening we are again at another eve. Those seven days, years, are gone. You remember the seven days of creation? God finished his work. On the eve of this new week, probably seven more years, we dare to celebrate another day (another year?). The eighth day of creation is coming. We dare to say YES to it. It is ours to celebrate. It is open to us. We leave it open.

THE URBAN TRIP by Andrea Merriman

Well, first of all, I think by the time Wednesday came around, we were all quite happy to get away from all of this, and you know while some of us were thinking things like "down with Sartre and to hell with Tillich" we were quite willing to get into the city and squander some of our money, buy expensive clothes, eat expensive foods, that kind of thing, so there was no need to get involved with whether or not "You are Accepted" or whether or not I would dare to do, or something like that. Yes, when we went into the city we were confronted with a certain reality, a rather uneasy reality. For instance, Caracas is a city of contrasts. There is so much and yet there are so many people living in such tiny shacks, and one felt as if one could never get away from it all. So there were Sartre and Tillich again nudging you and getting on your meditative council, and were forced to sit down and think on the whole situation.

I think, on the whole most people enjoyed the trip. Some of us, for instance, were confronted by life in the big city for the first time and to us it was a new experience. To others, they probably were accustomed to it and in a way there were really no new insights.

We visited the factory -- most of you remember that -- and I think probably the most important thing that came out of it was that I could look at this table cloth and I could feel it, and I could appreciate what went into it. I could understand how those workers stood there all day in the noise and in the dust and I could think of the cotton also ... that so much has gone into it. I think that now we are able to look at something and really appreciate what has gone into making it.

Afterwards, when we split up, some of us had a gay time ... and that was beautiful.