

SUMMARIES OF STATEMENTS BY THE
RELIGIOUS HOUSE PRIORS OF NORTH AMERICA

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THE SPIRIT CLIMATE OF 1972

The crisis of 1972 is of man so burned by his lucidity about the world that he flees to a variety of forms of suicide ranging from paralysis to sensual plunges. But in the midst of this collapse there are people who are responding to concrete signs of possibility demonstrated by those living out of grounded symbols and experimenting with comprehensive social models.

UNIVERSAL LUCIDITY

The man of 1972 is painfully lucid about the world he lives in. He knows the collapse of the old social systems, smelling hypocrisy everywhere; he experiences the collapse of dreams and of heroes; and he trembles at the tenuous strength of rationality as he watches the city of Pittsburg go berserk after winning the World Series. Man is frustrated by his awareness of the complex, dynamic world he is in. Ecology has shown him "interrelatedness as well as the contingency of all life. Not only the multiplicity of viewpoints but also the speed of the changes of all types have put him into "future shock." He is overwhelmed by the manifold possibilities of vocations, travels, styles, and associations. And through all this is the piercing self-awareness that any of these possibilities can take the one life he has to live.

DESPERATE RESPONSES

That lucidity produces a variety of desperate responses. One is the paralysis of anguish and despair. Sometimes he attempts to rationalize this saying, "This time is just a transitional state to a better future," as a kind of decisional naivete to avoid any involvement or responsibility. Or he may turn to the past seeking comfort in old answers such as the "Jesus freaks" or the practitioners of the occult. There is a kind of neo-romanticism--a grasping for sentimentality or for individualism. Then there are the decisional escapes whether they be into the sensuousness of sex, drugs, and alcohol, or into pursuing the "good life" where "momentary meaning" is sought. There are many forms of suicide ranging from blind sleeping to violent anger.

SPIRIT REMEDIES

But amidst all this there is an openness to the possibilities of the new future. What is required is that there are signs that men who are painfully lucid do engage in life with celebrative corporateness. This age needs symbols that are simple, yet hold the totality of life by their grounding in the deeps. These symbols must be rehearsed so that his self-consciousness of the Word is ever heightened. Finally, what is required are concrete demonstrations of the new sociological forms with grassroots polity, concrete long-range battleplans, and practical methodologies that include every man in the process of shaping the future. With these kinds of signs of possibility, the man of 1972 can be turned from suicide to a life of responsibility.

THE TASK OF THE ORDER FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS

The primary task of the order within the next 20 years in first of all concerned with the new strategies for implementing the new social vehicle tactical systems. Secondly, a new dimension of massive penetration is now possible with the new evangelism courses. Thirdly, the order is embarking on a new depth appropriation of the basic Christian symbols, sacraments, and rites of passage.

LOCAL CHURCH

The task of the order for the next twenty years focuses around the fact of recognition by the historic church of the movemental order as a sociological entity. Herein lies the intensified demand for the order to be the radical servant to the task of local church reformulation. Every metro must be a part of the galactic experiment in order that a global network of ecumenical parishes can come to be. The order must demonstrate how the new religious community can assume the pastoral dynamic in the local congregation.

ORDER EXPANSION

The attention of the order will have to be given to the fact of a large increase in growth rate especially in the extended relationships. The application of practical tactical models in signal communities has called forth many local, missional people. The task is to sustain Religious Houses in every metropolitan area on the North American continent and in each region of the globe. The order must train 100,000 col-leagues and nurture one million people under assignment.

SECULAR IMPACT

The order has now set before itself the task of sociological evangelism of the Word of contentless Christ for everyman. The possibility of establishing a network of primal communities at the regional, continental and international levels that would serve as a basis for personal vocatedness is at hand. This task is to raise corporate signs of common vocation for all life phases in every culture. The order must build the tactical arenas for the construction of the new social vehicle so that task forces might begin to deal with every major problem in every nation.

INTERNAL LIFE OF THE ORDER IN 1992

The internal life is concerned with articulating the self-conscious stance and the inner dynamics of the global order style. It is an attempt to give form to the spirit mode of the next twenty years relative to its manifestations in the missional, common, and symbolic life.

MISSIONAL LIFE

The internal life of the order in 1992 will reflect intense involvement in the local church experiment and extensive galactic research. The order's missional style will be characterized by vital interchange between the Religious Houses and the local churches as the new congregation emerges as a model of radical community. The order families will exemplify corporate mobility with a willingness to focus the mission in any assigned locale. This might take the form of multi-professional task forces moving to Religious Houses and parishes in any country to train others in tactical renewal and nurture of the spirit deeps.

COMMON LIFE

The internal image of the order will be that of a continuous research assembly which, through instant telecommunication, would enable global grassroots participation. Through computer technology, recommendations and articulated trends will be available for major decisions and particular applications. A multicultural order that spans the globe with interchange between every Ur will have symbolic leaders who meet representing every region of the world. This will be in a biannual gathering in the three geo-social areas for catch-up on the latest methods, as well as new visioning of the future. Here would take place the sharing of concerns for all peoples and the planning for tactical models of global care.

SYMBOLIC LIFE

The order's life by 1992 will be concerned with the creation of the Temple places. We will understand ourselves as the perpetual exploders of the religious deeps of human consciousness. Through the enactment of rites and celebrations, the order will create the symbolic designs for participation in interspace travel and the earth's regeneration. These events plus the liturgy, scriptural work, and visioning conversations will primarily identify the internal style. The image of servanthood would be conveyed through missional poverty and new garb such as a ring, which would be a reminder of the solitary/corporate existence.

THE MOVEMENTAL ORDER

The movemental order is a group of people who understand themselves to be called by God to rebuild the earth in response to His revolutionary acts. The objective response to the call may have many forms, but all are responses to God for the sake of the world. The descriptions and delineations of the three aspects of the movemental order, the attended, intended, and extended orders, are invented to enable a person to self-consciously decide how to expend his life. They do not indicate degrees of commitment or status, but rather are ways to point to the fact that some are critically involved in social leadership positions and others are able to free themselves to test new forms. Each one must be described in terms of mission, role, points of participation, assignment rationale, and residential locale.

ATTENDED ORDER

The attended order is that group of people who impact society by regrounding the primordial ontological symbols of the Word for everyman and reconstructing the vision of humanness for the future. It is these people who raise a sign of revolutionary participation in life by all men through their research and training. These people covenant their time and resources totally for the mission. They maintain full time participation in the corporate living dynamic of a Religious House.

INTENDED ORDER

The intended order understands its mission as the injection of the re-styled and re-storied gospel into the direct task of the reconstruction of the local church. These people play the catalytic role in the renewal of the church as the consultants who support and sustain the historical church. They participate in the local congregation, cadres, galactic structures, and movemental councils. The intended order is under assignment through comprehensive Week II strategies and are available for global deployment. These families maintain their local residences close to a Religious House or Outpost and meet periodically within the attended order structures.

EXTENDED ORDER

The extended order in its frontline engagement in society is the sustaining force within the social structures as it responds to the overt manifestations of suffering in its effort to reconstruct the norms of vocational life. This group of people is related to God's people as it constantly informs and reports relative to the broad battle plans of the movemental order. These people are present and participate directly in the symbolic meetings, councils, and related guilds. They operate under special assignment commissions and live in proximity to a Religious House.

THE STATE OF THE RELIGIOUS HOUSES
OF NORTH AMERICA

The Religious Houses of North America number 36, covering every one of the six areas of the continent. In addition there is one area (the East) that has a House in every region and one region (Chicago) that has a House in every metro. Each Religious House sustains the spirit movement in its region or metro, leads a galaxy of four churches (for a total of 144 churches in the experiment at present), and is a sign of the emerging new social vehicle. The spirit of the houses is one of pain-filled ecstasy as they see the demands but are confident they can meet them.

COMPREHENSIVE TASK

The external task of the Religious Houses in North America covers the areas of course penetration, local church development, and movement formulation. These three areas are closely tied together in comprehensive battleplans for the entire region with metro phasing rationales. The internal task involves the areas of training house members in movement wisdom, pedagogy, and other skills; developing the style of non-chalant intensity; and strengthening the spirit deep--in short, to develop priors. The task also includes holding up the symbols of the Word, that is, rehearsing the way life is through the daily office, the house church, and, in fact, through the very time design itself.

SIGN OF THE NSV

The Religious Houses are in themselves signs of the emerging new social vehicle. First, they are global, they live out of comprehensive models that include pushing to the bottom knowing, doing, and being. They care for the future of the whole globe with long range timelines. They form an actual international network with the Houses on other continents. Second, they are corporate, they act on the basis of common models, structures, and images. They are obedient to the consensus formed at continental meetings and they carry out common missions such as the global research network. Third, they live out of an understanding of the Word. However imperfectly, the members of the Religious Houses serve the mystery by being obedient to their situation exactly as it is.

PAIN-FILLED ECSTASY

The spirit of the Religious Houses can only be described as pain-filled ecstasy. There is no escaping the fact that the Religious House experiment, started only four years ago, is winning. There is an image that "there are no problems--there can only be strategic maneuvers." The Houses are confident of their ability to make it with nonchalance through such situations as finding jobs, searching for housing, and having small numbers of people. The Houses have assisted at the marriage of the movemental and established churches, as symbolized in the launching of the local church experiment, and have found both groups deeply enriched. There is pain and fright in the houses, as they see each success only raising higher demands, but it is mixed with eagerness to meet those demands and to care for those people. The Religious Houses are winning, but they know the long march has only begun.