

Symbolic Centrum

PRIOR'S CONTEXTUAL STATEMENT

The attached lecture given in Collegium on Revolutionary Fastidiousness was a signal event and a turning point for Symbolic Centrum relative to our style change demanded by the move to Kemper. However, we feel that the impact is much broader than the Symbolic Centrum order members and has implications for the total order as we move from one 20-year era into the next 20-years. This is a rough copy of the lecture, not for distribution. Editorial Post will be making another draft for more general use.

*Lyn Mathews.*

Symbolic Centrum

"Fastidiousness"  
GOING GLOBAL

September 15, 1972

T81

One of my "Walter Mitties" is to take the time out some time and make an order calendar of our "red-letter days." I mean June 5th, 1965, when we went through a little ritual down in the basement of Faculty West and Frank Hilliard got up with a hammer and a nail and the iron cross and hung it. That be one of our "red-letter days." Our moving days would be "red-letter days" on that calendar. I shall never forget the move from Austin, Texas, to Chicago and what that meant for our style. It was obviously a shift from our all living separately, to a corporate living situation. The kind of pain and the kind of joy that was involved that year in Evanston as we experienced it at an every day kind of level--forged out our style of common-ness. I can recall sitting in the living room at 7242 Asbury Avenue, with all of us sitting around arguing about the health insurance policy and which company it would be with, after we had done our research. I can remember those sessions of forging out commonness, our common style, of sessions with the lawyer relative to our stipends, and what that meant in relationship with the Internal Revenue Service. And I can remember the first check that was written, as a symbol of our commonness. It was on July 28, 1962, and it was written to David McCleskey and it was \$269.13. That was a great symbol, (having been in that post ever since) of forging out our common style, and it was painful.

One way to make the style shift was the beginning of the "two suitcases." We thought we had done very well in peeling down all the necessities of life so that we arrived here with only one of those huge trailers and two little trailers behind cars. That was a major shift in our style. That was six houses full of goods, and we got it down to those trailers. All the goods wouldn't fit into the house we were living in, but there was a coach house, so they were stored there and we like to kid Ann and Joe Slicker to this day that they had the most. But we had peeled down, you know. Those beautiful crdenzas, you never know what to do with them, but they were put out in the garage; and all of us were surprized when the Lord reinforced that style of peeling down, when we had a fire. That should be a "red letter day" on our calendar. All those things in the coach house burned and had to be carted away. It was the very beginning of our common style.

Cars, we had to learn that we had to give our cars over to those six families. We had all kinds of schemes of maintaining some kind of individuality there, but we never really pulled them off. But the pain of finally putting our cars into common use.

You don't realize how our menus represent our commonness. We used to have knock-down-and-drag-out fights relative to what was going to be on our menu. I'm not going to name names this morning but one day one of our men got up and said, "I refuse to be living with a group of people who insist on having liver every week." A three man commission went around to all the grocery stores to check out the iron in food other than liver. Just the pain of forging out that kind of commonness. And that was the style that would mark that first year in Evanston.

The reason we had made this great move from Austin to Chicago was to engage ourselves in the social process, and after six months we knew that we were not going to do what we had decided to do by being in the suburb of Evanston. So that began the search for the new facilities, and ended in our move to the Chicago West Side. The first day of August, 1963, was another "red letter day".

We came out a couple of weeks before, after we had decided to move to the Bethany Seminary. I recall our coming out and sitting on the back steps of faculty West. There were eight families. That was one more than had moved. We had married the Buss family just before we left Austin, and it was a great event to welcome them, and the Marshalls had joined us. So we had eight families when we moved to the West side. And we sat on those steps and looked at all of those buildings and all that space, and, I remember very clearly, we said, "This will do us for at least 10 years." This will do for at least 10 years.

We got the inkling you know that a new kind of style was going to have to emerge. I remember that one of those families that came from Austin was the Bill and Greta Cozart family. It just so happened that the week before we moved when we were going out to look at the seminary, Greta's mother and father were visiting. We knew that the trip over to the West Side was going to be a mind-blower so we took the trouble to schedule the most scenic route from Evanston. Well, the end of the story was that they didn't follow the route and ended up traveling all over the West Side before they found the seminary. But we knew that that move was going to demand of us a new kind of style. I think that the word that holds that for me in that in the last 10 years we have become "ghettoized." We have acquired a style of the ghetto. And I would want to lift that up in total affirmation, that our becoming ghettoized was absolutely necessary. That is held for me symbolically by the woodchips. Believe it or not when we arrived in 1963 the lawns were all green and the shrubs were beautiful. That was August, and by December the first brown patches had appeared on the lawn. By the end of the next summer we had no lawn. That to me is what it meant to become ghettoized, in order to do our mission. Green lawns were for all of us not only a delight but a very important value in life that we had to let go. In other words it was the style of detachment pushed down to deeper level than it was in Evanston.

Another part of our style was that of graciousness. That happened around 1967, when the Mathews and Hilliards came back from our trip in South East Asia, and announced that we needed to become the gracious people. We have become that. Graciousness is not something that means that we can greet visitors. Our graciousness means that we can graciously receive and be malleable to every situation that comes to us. We have become masters of graciousness. I could spend all morning recalling the situations that arise out of nothing that demand graciousness, demand that we receive that situation and do what is necessary.

Certainly the most crucial part of our style in Chicago was the style of becoming the religious. We discovered that to do any kind of social action anywhere--building a new civilization, creating a new world, no matter how you want to talk about that--is not possible except that you be the religious in depth. And we are the religious. And that has happened in the last few years. The external manifestations are the other, the way we have experimented on the solitary, our whole internal life in the Ecclesiola; the way this has been molded in those 10 years, I would say that is what it means to be an Ecclesiola. I would put my money on that. That is what happened in terms of our style. We became the detached ones, we became the gracious ones and we became the religious ones, and began to sense that word destiny. Since reading Gogarten, I think that on the west side of Chicago we began to see ourselves as a people with a historical destiny, both corporately and individually. That is part of our style. What does a people look like who have a destiny that is going to change all of history?

For me the move to Kemper, is pure symbol. Being on the West Side it was very appropriate that we be in a seminary. There we discovered that our style was to be the religious, and the place was that of an old seminary. The move to Kemper is appropriate relative to the kind of shift that we are making in going global. It became very apparent two years ago that if we were going global and Symbolic Centrum was to be an international center, that we needed head quarters more appropriate to that situation and that Fifth City would hold the radical particular. The shift to Kemper just is fantastic. That we are in a building that was used for something as secular as insurance symbolizes that we have made the shift of going global. I brood these days on how we are going to get that our relative to style. One image that I have these days is crack troops. West Side as boot camp prepared us to be the crack troops that we need to be relative to going global. It was Nancy who mentioned that Germans goosestep. I rather like the Russians--they kick all the way up. And we are ready to kick all the way up. The Marine Corps is another image that holds what it means to be crack troops. You never see a Marine where his bars aren't polished, his shoes clean. The kind of discipline that emerges there is that kind of style that we recognize when we see it. I don't know how that is going to get externalized for us, but one thing that comes to me is that word Fastidiousness. If we were gracious back on the West Side, here we are the fastidious ones. And we are not fastidious ones, we are not fastidious just to be fastidious. What our mission requires: if we are going to be crack troops which are out to change civilization is fastidiousness. The time has come for Revolutionary Fastidiousness.

What does that mean? What does it look like? Well, one thing it means for me is that we are going to keep this place clean. Part of our style is that we are going to keep our quarters clean and there is going to be a new code of shooting a man at sun rise. That is if you leave your plate on the table, or don't take your cup out to the kitchen, or flip ashes on the floor, you are shot at sun rise. That could not possibly have been a virtue for us back on the West Side. We could not have possibly been that. I recall Providence High School up on Central Park. Their value in the midst of that situation was fastidiousness. You would go in there and the fastidiousness of that place was overwhelming. And they are out of existence. Or I remember doing one teaching trip. I went to a place where they had an OEO preschool. We walked in there and everything was just right, and when we tried to move something the woman who was there to help us almost died. My most immediate response was "isn't this wonderful" and then I began to ask a

few questions. "How many children do you have in your preschool?" "25."  
Ok, maybe you can be fastidious with 25.

What I want to point out that not only was lack of fastidiousness a possibility but fastidiousness was not required on West Side. Now it is. And I don't know how we are going to get that job done. A lot of us, including myself, are going to have to change our ways and are going to have to become sensitive to that dimension of life. I like to think that the first move was made this summer at Camp. Everyone that went up to visit the camp, and had a look at all that was going on there said that the children were clean. I think that this was the first sign of what you and I need to become in order to go global. That is not a luxury. It is an absolute necessity at this point.

Globality is part of our new style. I don't know how that manifests itself externally, but first of all what is happening to you and me is that globality is becoming internalized. That began when the internalization of globality began, and we no longer were comfortable with our ur image decor. We still use it on occasion, but there was a point in our history when we were telling ourselves we were global people and that the only way we had to hold that was that every time we decorated it was with ur image. We no longer do that. I think that was the beginning sign of internalizing globality. That is not easy, because you and I are very parochial people. I think the global odyssey is the main thrust, just the impact of a whole month of putting your feet down on the holy ground of the whole world. Internalizing globality. How is it in our new style that is demanded of us that we begin to think, that we begin to feel, that we begin to resolve globally. The way that is held now is with sort of a discomfort with that word "international." It is as though to say "international," implies that there is a "national." I don't want to use that word "international," so I am trying to program myself to think in the 54 areas. Maybe what we should do this quarter is to have a catachism class on the 54 areas of the world--that we no longer think North America but that we think in terms of those areas. How do you internalize feeling globally. That is harder yet, for me. But one thing that is helpful here is Sartre, that paper in CS-I which has that fantastic point that you and I are an oppressed people, as long as the gifts of everyman across the globe are not gotten out into history. I picked up on that in terms of just feeling oppressed, being those with a global impact, being able to respond to a situation, feeling globally.

What does that look like? I am convinced that this internalization of being global gives us the guts to stand day after day after day as the crack troops that we are. When we get it internalized and experienced in our being then we will be forced to decide to stand as the crack troops that are needed so that everyone's gifts get out.

And the resolve, how do you resolve globally. I have to have handles, because I don't have propensity or the temperament to resolve globally. I find myself most of the time resolving in the Order Finance post. It gets down to that restricted arena. How do we get that resolve into every situation. We are living globality, that is just the indicative of our life together.

LYN MATHEWS