

OPENING ADDRESS OF THE GLOBAL PRIOR'S COUNCIL

Until we gathered here tonight, I hadn't really stood present to the fact that this is our 25th year. In 1952, when we began, there were just a few people in Texas who were dreaming dreams of the future. I would venture that in 1952, many of us gathered here were in other parts of the world also dreaming the same dreams. It is a deep honor for me to stand here recall as we gather the many other occasions that we have come together in Council. There is always the experience of awe breaking through in the very fact of our gatheredness.

This has been a year of very practical abasing and abounding. It has been a year of great successes and setbacks on the three campaign fronts. It has been a year of losing nerve for many, and for even more, a great year in which confidence and courage has been experienced. It has been a year of incredible breakthroughs, methodological breakthroughs, and models that didn't quite make it.

It has been a year of mobility, the realignment at a moment's notice of many forces, and for many more, a year of just staying put and doing the act of servicing. It has been a year of living in tents and walking with kings. It has been a year of global gatherings such as the World's Fair in Kwangyung Il and local gatherings such as Town Meetings and stake meetings. It has been a year of acceleration teams on location and global treks that went around the world. It has been a year of great learnings and equally great unlearnings.

All in all, this year has been one incredible happening grounded in very particular events. Running through all of these events has been the intensification of fear and fascination of standing before and living in the mystery itself. This has been a year of victory and I am reminded, in speaking of victory, of something that happened in Korea; it is so hard to describe what happened at the Kwangyung Il World's Fair.

Our group was very graciously hosted by Korea. We were taken on a three-day bus tour and really saw the country. The last event in the tour was a trip to the demilitarized zone. Before you get there, you go through concentric circles of guards that are way out from the DMZ. As we reached the first station, the bus stopped in front of a young soldier, who stood with his gun at attention. We waited for his greeting. He lifted up his hand and said, "Pil Sung." Five times before we reached the demilitarized zone, I heard this identical greeting, "Pil Sung." "Pil Sung." Well, I was curious, so when I found a young man who could speak English, I asked, what is this word, "Pil Sung?" He stepped back and with great pride, he replied, "It means victory." I am glad to get another word for victory into my vocabulary.

The great happening of this year is fourfold. The New World, the New Church, The New Movement and Profound Humanness are all in our midst. The New World has emerged and it is the world of local man. Four or five years ago, when we first sang the song "Local Man Shall Rise Again," it was a prophetic statement, a song geared to the future. Today, when we sing that song, we know it is an announcement of fact.

Just a short year ago, when we sent out the replication staff to do the school, our question was "Can the state of Maharashtra supply the manpower for replication?" Our answer then was, "Well, we're praying so." "We hope so." "We believe maybe." Our response, at any rate, was not an unequivocal "yes." This year we have moved the zone of support down to the smallest bit of geography, which is the village. For the first time in all of history, Maharashtra has the possibility of caring for its 35,000 villages. This happening is a cause for sheer astonishment. As I ask you this night, do you think the globe can supply the troops for replication around the 24 social demonstrations, I take it that your response to that question at this moment in history is an unequivocal yes! Some of us may not live to see it, but it has already happened.

The New Church is also in our midst. The task of the church is witnessing love and justing love: Witnessing love-awakening-Town Meeting; Justing love-engagement-social demonstration. I was addressed by one point that Karl Rahner made again and again in his book, The Shape of the Church To Come, which we studied. He said that whatever this new church looked like, it was going to be comprised of people who we would never have dreamed would show up. That has happened and the Research Assembly bears witness to that fact. If you got into conversations with participants, you'd discover again and again that you were talking with someone who had only been to a Town Meeting or someone whose only contact with us had been a consult.

Town Meeting is mass awakening and it is an awakening of possibility that is given to every community in which it has been held. Just think -- 1,500 Town Meetings in 24 nations! It is no longer possible to count the number of people we have impacted. I can remember one of the rituals we held at the end of each quarter in the old days. We would sit down and count the participants at our courses: "There was an RS-1 in Peoria. How many people went to that?" "What about that course in Ada?" Finally, we'd get a total and we would say, "We impacted 784 this quarter." When we can no longer keep track of the numbers, we know that mass awakening has happened.

The New Liturgy has emerged: "Everything is possible. We are the ones who can do it." That is what Town Meeting is all about. That word of possibility is being acted out in community after community, engaging the most amazing group of people in structurally caring for their neighborhoods. This too, is cause for astonishment.

At the beginning of Town Meeting, when things were a bit slow getting off the ground, our question was, "How can we relate to that apathetic external situation where no one will act." Then the Lord gave us Oklahoma 100, and that was an occasion in which we decided to win. The question then was, "What is the contradiction that needs to be dealt with, and how do we reshape our tools and make our models more flexible so that we can tap into the resurgence already present?"

After Oklahoma 100, Town Meeting took off in North America and around the world. Can you imagine that we have had Town Meetings in seven of the eight provinces in the nation of Kenya? We were discussing Town Meeting and the excitement we felt when we received a letter describing the events of the year in Kenya recently.

One of our colleagues, with great passion, said, "This is only the beginning. We are going to have 1,000 Town Meetings in Kenya this year." I am certain this will happen and as it does, the church will be taking a brand new leap forward into the future.

It is timely that in this Council we turn our attention to the new impact courses. The role of the Global Women's Forum in its pilot run this spring quarter has been profound. In India, we'd been having a very rough time getting support for our project from one corporation executive until his wife attended the Global Women's Forum. Two weeks after the forum, the grant came through. That is the kind of excitement going on among the 15%. Then, there has been the great excitement of receiving reports when the GWF went to the villages and it worked there!

Underneath all of this is the effective invisibility of the global servant force. I am sure, for instance, that the ITI's held in India long ago birthed Maliwada. You would not have made that projection then, but those beginning ITI's did birth Maliwada. In Town Meeting New Jersey, where 140 meetings were held in two weeks, many of the coordinators who were doing the training were old grads, movement colleagues who had attended Academy or had been to some of the early awakenment courses.

The Campaign News is a fantastic publication. It should go out on a broad base and we must find a way, postagewise, to do that. The Campaign News, as I pick it up each week, is like a church bulletin telling me what the Ladies Aid Society and the Men's Bible Class are doing. That is right. All of this is happening in the latent church.

I haven't had time to look at the People of God triangles, but I want to get back there someday. The latent church is the new church that is on the move. But that is also true of the historical church. I know at least one man in our midst who has never lost his confidence, his trust, and has never become cynical about the historical church. He has insisted in the past two years that they are ready to move. This year, we have discovered this fact for ourselves. Can you imagine that the church is coming to the Global Servant Force with proposals rather than the Global Servant Force making proposals to the church? That is quite a reversal of events and that is a cause for astonishment.

The New Movement is in our midst. Several years ago we began talking about the new movement, intuiting that it was out there. Now we know concretely that there is a new movement. There are people out there with faces, names and skills. I worked with a group that was writing a document on the movement during the spring quarter and through the Assembly. We felt for history's sake, that we needed to write up the symbolic, the extended and the movemental order. This was a difficult task because it was hard to draw any distinguishing lines between those three aspects of the ordering dynamic, save in terms of fatedness.

In the old days, the Extended Order was a group of people by whom the Symbolic Order was threatened. The Movemental Order was something we were either a bit envious of or felt superior to. Now the gaps have been closed and the chasms have been bridged. There is a Movemental Order, all committed to the mission, all under assignment, all disciplined, all trained, all caring, all Those Who Care people. Now the only question is where and how, in the maneuvers, can all this power be focused.

Town Meeting: New Jersey was an incredible demonstration of the force of the movement. It is obvious that the people in the houses could never have done that. The colleagues in the New York area, the old metro cadre people, pulled off the New Jersey meetings in a very real and practical way.

The Guardian Network has been another astonishing happening this year. As I got off the bus in Kwangyung Il, the first person I saw was Jeff Coledge, looking nothing like his Boston aristocracy, and Bill Goodger, looking nothing like his professional veterinarianness. Both were tired, both were dirty, both were expended, and both were joy-filled. They were there putting the last touches on Kwangyung Il.

Someone mentioned that Rod Wilson, when he was on the acceleration team in Sudtonggan, was a priorship dynamic to the auxiliary that you could never imagine. I am sure that Rod was wearing his blue shirt, but it takes more than a blue shirt. The blue shirt is but the outward sign of an interior resolve, and there have been guardians demonstrating that all over the world. I hope that in this Council we find a way to put at least a loose structure on the Guardian Network around the globe.

At the Assembly, on the Victory Plaza, the celebrative mood came out of being engaged in the practical task of building the future. There was a game going on the Plaza called, "How many seconds can we go without talking shop?" The Plaza was merely a scene shift for a continuation of the same drama of engagement all around.

Form has been given to the invisible college this year. It seems that colleagues are coming out of the woodwork. An elderly man came into this building just last week. He found himself in Development Centrum and admitted he had heard that something was going on in here. He wanted to know about it, because whatever it was, he wanted to start working in it. This is a familiar story. I venture that it will be repeated again and again during this Council, and that is cause for astonishment.

Finally, the New Humanness is in our midst. Perhaps this is our greatest victory in the past year. It is certainly our greatest gift to the future. An exciting part of our Korean bus tour was a visit to four of the Saemaul Umdong villages, which are part of the Village Movement of the nation of Korea. It was most impressive observing the style of the village leaders. We would gather in the assembly hall where the village leader would talk to us. The village leaders were all competent young men. They would begin by picking up their wooden pointers and working through a great chart. Just seeing those charts made all of us realize that we had colleagues. I haven't encountered in any other movement the kind of charts that are part of the Korean Village Movement.

The difference between community development and our human development projects is symbolically held in an amphitheatre in Kwangyung Il, with the 24 flags of all the nations around it. The Village Movement has encountered the problem of motivity. Motivity is a gift in our human development projects. We know that it is a matter of life and death to work hard all night in the rain in order to build an amphitheatre. The emphasis is motivity, and that is our gift.

With Profound Humanness in our midst, we have seen a new inventiveness emerge in doing Town Meetings around the globe. This inventiveness is grounded in saying "Yes" to the intrusion of the future, the intrusion of the whole globe or if you will, in this company, the intrusion of the Mystery.

We have seen new leadership emerge in doing the campaigns; leadership grounded in the resolve to care. You don't have to take a Dale Carnegie course to learn to be a leader. Once you have decided to care with passion, you know how to be a leader, you know how to be a general, a samuri, a gerka, an immortal.

We have seen a new corporateness emerge that is grounded in the decision to love this world and care for it. Once that decision is made, you could care less who is next to you doing the task just as long as he is doing the task. The incredible happening is the emergence of a depth collegiality and fellowship that you could never dream possible in the midst of this task.

Finally, we have seen a new creativity emerge that is grounded in the decision to be those who expend ourselves to be the nobodies, the cruciform ones, on behalf of the deprived ones of this world. When that decision is made, authentic selfhood is released.

What is the state of being of the Movement or the Order? I would submit that our state of being is one of sheer ecstasy. I want to read something that holds this happening:

"The creative act is by its very nature, ecstatic. It involves movement out beyond the boundaries. There is an act of transcendence in it. Creative activity will not come to terms with the given state of the world. It desires another. The creative act always calls up the image of something different. It imagines something higher, better and more beautiful than this, the given. This evoking of the image of something different, something better and more beautiful, is a mysterious power in men, and it cannot be explained by the action of the world environment."

This year we have experienced the ecstasy that is grounded in the deep pain of hard work, the pain of literally taking upon ourselves the suffering of this world. We have been the channel, the instrument, the vessel through which the power of Being itself has been proclaimed, in which the power of Being itself has been demonstrated and experienced. It has been extremely hard work and yet, the promise was not that it would be easy. For the ecstasy born out of the life that is given, when you take unto yourself the suffering of this world, is death.