

I AM THE WAY

A friend of mine is the wrath of God in my life.

Shortly after my friend arrived back here I met her in the hall and after exchanging a few pleasantries she had the audacity to ask me, "Well, what did you do this year?" I had that experience of being called upon to speak where you open your mouth and your tongue is frozen. After discovering that my tongue was frozen, I think I mumbled something like, "Oh, well I was here last year," and quickly went on.

Later on I discovered that I was carrying on a dialogue with her and that I was on the defensive. I said to myself, "I have, too, been engaged in seeing that the resources get to the Third World. I worked on a proposal that got \$200,000 to India and I worked on the proposal for that mini-bus," and I went down this list of how, ever since I made my commitment nearly 20 years ago to be engaged in seeing that the resources were redistributed, I had been doing that. I realized that I was being defensive and so I sat down, took out a sheet of paper and I asked myself, "Why am I so defensive? What did I do last year?" I made a list of about ten things that I'd been engaged in and then without any preconceived notions, at the top of the list I found that I wrote, "The Year of the Team".

Having written "The Year of the Team", another two arenas in which I'd been engaged were triggered. What I discovered in this little exercise was that in the past year I didn't do anything, but I sure was a part of a lot of teams that did. What they did wasn't all that spectacular either, but what they did was necessary. That's what I want to begin with because I think it's indicative of the new era into which you and I have been thrown.

A few months ago when I was in India to do the Community Extension Module in Maliwada, I was talking with a colleague and she kept bugging me. Day after day she would say, "When do you think we're going to take this leap in Maharashtra?", or she would say, "How could we take this leap in Maharashtra?", and after several days of this I finally said with a bit of exasperation, "I don't think you need to look for the leap anymore. I think you have been leaped." That's what this talk is all about. It's about the fact that you and I have been leaped, whether we wanted to be or not.

This picture represents the fact and the how of that leap. God has pushed us into the way of direct service to the world and it turns out to be not exactly what we were looking for. They have this utensil in India for making snack food. It has a kind of a bowl and a smasher. You put the batter inside the bowl and you squeeze the handles together and the batter is squeezed out through the holes and falls down into a pot of boiling oil. That was the way that I was leaped this year.

When you look at the outermost sides of the picture, I want to start with where it is that we've experienced being leaped. I want to start at the bottom with the guild. I began this year as a member of Team 4, assigned in this building. There were about 15 or 16 members on my team, but after the

first week I realized that several of them were phantoms. I started looking for the phantoms but I couldn't find them. I went into despair and said, "I'm supposed to be the prior of this team. How can I prior when I can't even find them?" After several weeks of despair, I finally said, "Now, I am going to conquer this situation, divide and conquer." So I divided the team into sub-units and found several of the people on the team and I said, "You are responsible for these two people, these phantoms that I can't find." That gave me the courage to say, "Now I'm going to track these phantoms down one by one and find out why they are here." I finally said to myself, "I used to know what it meant to be a prior. And it's obvious that I don't, and yet, it's obvious that people need to have raised for them the question of what it is they're about in history."

While I was still recovering from this shock, I woke up one morning to discover that I had been assigned to the AID Task Force which worked on trying to deal with the questions of accountability that were being raised for us by AID. I kept telling myself that I used to know how to define a contradiction and go after it. It was very difficult to try to figure out what the major contradiction was and even more difficult to move on it.

Shortly afterward, a couple of us were assigned to work on documentation. Every day we got further and further under the table as we read through paper after paper of all the documentation that was called for, all over the world. Finally, we looked at each other and said, "No way. There is absolutely no way that the two of us can deal with this task. We have got to hook other people into doing it." So we put together a documentation module for the HDTS in Fifth City, which had representatives from the 19 North American projects. We convinced ourselves that, if we did this documentation module, all those people would go back and do all their own documentation. That would mean we wouldn't have to do any documentation in North America. We did that module. It was not what we expected. People came out of that day having had a spiritual exercise. We didn't know what to do. We were overwhelmed. People were still coming up two days afterward to tell us what an incredible event it had been. I remember one colleague said that if we had known in Oombulgurri what we had been able to go through in that module on documentation, we would never have had to leave Oombulgurri. That was very difficult for me to swallow. All of these examples of teams that I've been a part of this year are pointing to the fact that people are wrestling today with the issue of integrity; of how to live a life of integrity. You and I find, in all kinds of ways, that we are called to deal with that issue, whether it's through documentation, whether it's through AID, or whether it's being on a team with somebody that's always disappearing. The issue of integrity is before people.

I had the privilege this past January to participate in the Operations Band meeting. I'm not sure why since I was in Research, but I went to the Operations Band meeting and it was incredible. When we reviewed the three campaigns around the world and tried to define the major tasks facing the Operations Band, there was broad consensus that we had to deal with the symbolization of the Band of 24. Later on we discovered that, on the other side of the world, in Maliwada, where the Research Band met, they came to the same conclusion. After having reached a consensus at the band meeting to hold 24 Community Extension Modules, the band set out to forge the consensus around the world. My witness here this morning is not that we did 24 CEMs.

It is that one year ago, if you had asked me if this body of people could forge a global consensus without being all gathered here in the same place at the same time to move on it, I would have said, "No way." Yet I participated in and witnessed the fact that we did forge a global consensus. That is one example of being the corporate prophets.

The consensus formation on Sunday was another great moment in my life. It reminded me very vividly of a similar session during the research colloquy in Maliwada. We spent one whole day trying to reach a consensus. It was sweltering heat: sweat dripped; tempers were high, and the stakes were high as we looked at, "How do we decide that we're going to move on the block." In a nation noted for being unable to talk reasonably together and very easily raised to violence, a group of about 150 Indian colleagues sat through sweltering heat and forged a consensus on how they were going to move on launching the block experiment.

Right after I came back from India, I was assigned to design the Symposium. The Symposium was the idea of a gathering here in April which did some initial work on what needed to happen this summer. When I got back the beginning of May, we started figuring out how we were going to get ready for the summer. There were six of us. We had six major tasks, so we divided into six major teams. We even made plaques for each team. After a week of wrestling with being the one person team on the Symposium, I started recruiting. From all over, but particularly from Area Chicago, people started coming. We had people here from the Milwaukee House, from the Green Bay outpost, from the Chicago House, from the Minneapolis House, from the Cincinnati House and, finally, from Area San Francisco. Then on the other side of the continent, New York figured out how to get Fiddler on the Roof for us. I just mention these as examples of how, in the past year, you and I have discovered that we are about the task of enabling people to forge consensus. That is a large part of the future that is out before us. We may think that our methods are very weak and fragile but we have a task of giving those methods to the world.

Relative to the spirit guide, I was part of a team that was trained to do, and then did, Voyages. I was part of a team that put together CEM manuals. I was a part of Team 12 in the GRA that did the drama on the Milagro Beanfield War. More recently, I'm a part of this team on talks. After we received our assignments we committed ourselves not to drop out of the team until all the members had done their talks. These were all teams that had to do with releasing profound myth in our day.

I was also part of a team that did the CEM in Maliwada. At the opening of the CEM, we had a large center table. Seated beside one another were captains of industry, heads of major government and quasi-government agencies, and leaders from Maliwada. I witnessed, during that opening ceremony, those people sitting shoulder to shoulder and engaging in dialogue with each other as colleagues. If you'd told me four years ago that was a possibility, I never would have believed it. The team that I was the most delighted to be a part of this year was a very short lived team. I don't even know if the other members thought of it as a team. It was a team to do site selection for the block experiment. I had been in India for two years; during that two year time at least 220 of the 232 projects were launched. I never site

selected any of them. As a matter of fact, I only did one half of a consult in all of them because I got lost getting there and was late. So one morning when Vinod asked me if I would go as a part of the site selection team, I was unabashedly honored and shocked. I couldn't figure out how he thought I'd know anything about site selection. There had been other site selection teams before ours. The Panchayat had gone out site selecting. My husband had gone out site selecting. As soon as we got in the car I was asked what criteria we were going to use as our criteria. I asked myself, "How do they think I know what the criteria are?", but I quickly went through the documents I typed when we did consults and remembered the criteria we had spelled out. We drove through the villages near Bombay, then went into Chikhale to meet with the village leaders there and to talk with the Panchayat Samite chairman. The people of Chikhale had their one life-long dream, a road, fulfilled. They were so incredibly grateful that they had held a special meeting in which they worked out the criteria for construction and care of the road. They decided the road was going to be the same width all the way. They decided that those farmers who had grown trees along the side of the road would cut them down. They even decided that, since it was going to be a tar road, people with bullock carts would use the nearby rutted road so that the tar road wouldn't be ruined. It was quite an experience to watch a village which had been so divided on so many issues stand together and work through their future! I point to this and the arena of the team as what it means to be engaged in doing effective action.

There are four thrusts for the future: the guild, the corporate prophet, the spirit guide and the team which seem to be very well grounded in our history as a community of people. Starting on the left side of the diagram, with indicative ethics, it is clear that the ethics that you and I have been forging for the last ten years are grounded on the same reality on which we grounded all of our theologizing: that we begin with "what is", not with "what we'd like to have", not with "the way it could be". We begin with "what is". We have been engaged in figuring out how to communicate this indicative ethics to the world, to the masses. We've done that by working out the manoeuvre methodology and by working out campaigns together. This methodology for communicating the indicative ethic of our time is one which you and I are going to find ourselves communicating over and over again.

On the right side, the other side of the existential axis, the morality of creativity is clearly, foundationally grounded in our understanding of the ethics of ambiguity. Finally, the future is wide open and you and I are condemned to be free to create it. We have wrestled with articulating this morality in creating the formats of Town Meeting and special forums. On the bottom, on the spacial axis, is the morality of authenticity. Actually the symbol at the bottom in the corner, the wedge blade is not from RS-1 but from CS-1 and the culture curriculum. During the secular revolution of our time, the fact is that man makes his decisions not in relation to authority but out of authenticity. That is, where he is willing to put down his life. We have been engaged in the last ten years in figuring out how to communicate this morality of authenticity through the Band of 24, and the Replication Experiment. At the top of the spacial axis is the symbol of contextual ethics. We started with a critique of situation ethics which seemed inadequate because of successiveness or the experience of changing situations every moment,

and because of reductionism or the fact that we tend to reduce our world in making decisions. We ended up the journey on contextual ethics by creating a comprehensive screen out of which to make decisions about the world, the social process triangles. We've been engaged in the last ten years in trying to communicate that methodology of contextual ethics through the consults and LENS. All of this happened to us because we had the Other World exposed to us in our work on the social process, and the Other World has become the major articulation of the ontological ground of this secular ethic of our time.

I want to go through some of the dangers that we face, having discovered that we are now living in the new era of service to the world. The major rubric for those dangers has to do with the failure to re-evaluate the forms and modes that served us during the time of demonstration. We have created forms and modes that served us well in the time of demonstration and they will serve us well in a time of service but only if we are willing to re-think them. Unless we re-think them, they will be dangers. The first is Xavierism. The danger there is dynasty-building. The second is global glue. The danger there is restrictive forms. The third is a self-sufficient movement. The danger is naivete. The fourth is long-range do-able vision. The danger is priorities which are unable to be implemented. The fifth is our transparent role, and the danger is our role being defined by any fool.

First, Xavierism: At the beginning of the last decade, David and I were assigned to the Philippines for a year. We were the only two people there. There were other outposts at other points in SEAPAC. But we had to operate out of the Xavier principle, because we wouldn't afford even to get on the phone to call anybody. We had to figure out, totally on our own, what we were going to do. Nowadays, we can't afford that same kind of Xavierism, it's going to be different. This year, we got phone calls from Area Singapore demanding that we come work with them while they figured out their future because they were clear that what they decided was going to affect the rest of us. That's a new kind of Xavierism. Unless we figure out how to clarify this new form of Xavierism, we could easily fall into fiefdoms and kingdoms set up by any of us out of a false sense of local autonomy.

Secondly, global glue: Many years ago there was a political form in this body called the Permanent House Church. One day, when we were ready to move into the era of demonstration after completing an era of teaching, Joe Mathews got up in December council and announced that the Permanent House Church was going out of being. The new era of demonstration that we were moving into required new forms of polity so at that time we called into being the area and house priors. Today, we are faced with something similar. The Panchayat went around the world this year trying to push us to think through the possibility of continental GRAs and a representational council. We've worked for the last two or three years on the transrationalization of the Houses. I don't know what the new operational polity for this body is going to be, but I am clear from my experience in India, that, unless we release our operational polity and re-design it and re-think it, we will discover that we have created restrictive forms that do not allow us to meet the demands of the future.

In the arena of a self-sufficient movement: During a time of demonstration, of creating those tiny signs of hope around the world, we could go anywhere. We could claim the geography boldly, because nobody knew who we were or what we were doing. We could do just about whatever we wanted to. We were unknown.

Well, if you haven't discovered it yet, we are known. There is no escape from being historical actors, when we are on the plane of history. What is printed makes a difference because words we have written have been used against us. We discovered that we were not self-sufficient. Unless we can figure out ways of speaking boldly to the world, unless we can acquire a kind of wordly savvy; we will discover ourselves making naive and stupid statements.

In the arena of long-range, do-able vision: In an era of demonstration we had to commit ourselves to do something and find the funds later. Now we discover that if we are actually going to pull off our long-range vision to the two million villages, we can't operate that way. We have got to get control of our operational systems so that when we are faced with a new opportunity, a new way of implementing our vision, we have the possibility of doing so. We wrestled for a long time with whether or not we were going to do the 24 CEMs because we did not have the funds to do them.

In the arena of the transparent role: During the era of demonstration it was necessary and very easy to play a low-profile role, but now that we are being requested to do programs all over the place, we have to take the initiative in structuring and articulating our role in history. If we fail to do so, other people will do it for us and they will be people who have no understanding of what we are out to do in the midst of civilisation.

Lastly, the Way, the way of service: I'm supposed to talk about the Tao, but I've never studied the Tao, so I think that all I can say to you about the way of service is, "To bend is to maintain integrity. To deviate is to be direct." When we're forging out our style of service, we have to be grounded in the way things are. We have to be able to move and turn and bend and shift as the situation demands; we cannot be rigid. The eight-fold path illuminated by the Buddha has been re-imaged by Soren Kierkegaard with the statement that the way is how we travel it. Buddha first brought this to consciousness centuries ago when he described the middle way of compassion; the necessity of an ethical posture of the right view, the right resolve, the right speech, the right action, the right livelihood, the right effort, the right thought and the right mediation.

Our own struggle over the last 25 years has been to articulate "the Way" in secular language. Many people have tried to understand the awakening of our time, the secular revolution, and articulate profound humanness. The Barefoot Boy talk, a few years ago, pushed through our Christian bigotry.

"Finally at every moment in history, the kingdom has to be forced by the anointed one. That is what the Christ is all about. That is what Jesus is all about. If you attempt to take the great historical religions of the world, I think you can organize them under the category of "the anointed", "the enlightened one", or "the illuminated one" as in Buddhism or Hinduism, and then in Taoism it might be "the victorious one" or the "effective one". Now when you intensity awareness and engagement you have a third category of being, the profound core of human being-ness which is the anointment; to lay down your life on behalf of the mis-treated of the time in which you live. This barefoot boy, what did he look

like? He walked down the road flinging over his shoulder "The Other World is at hand. Turn yourselves around and believe this." And he never stopped. He didn't pause to see whether anyone was impacted and by no means whether there was some kind of follow-up to it. He flung it over his shoulder and moved on for the rest of his life, three very short years. Or were they three very long years?

And as another aspect of the drama as he strode along he would fling over his shoulder, "Come on, follow me". He never stopped. He could care less. If he cared he was no longer about his Father's business. Now, the interesting thing is that he looked back and saw two or three, five or six. I don't know how many he asked, maybe a couple of hundred. All the details are not there. Did he expect to get 100 out of 1000, and then to lose all but ten out of the 100 and then to discover that only one out of the ten had guts enough to stand? When he saw the little group behind him began an exercise called the Training of the Twelve.

Now take a look at that Training of the Twelve. He always walked and as he walked he seemed to be always talking. He was throwing over his shoulder sayings, not teachings but sayings. What do I mean by that? Well, he had no code to transmit, no creed to transmit. What he was doing was jarring the people into the awareness of the other world in the midst of this world which these people had always known about. He was jarring them into existential awareness. That was his first job of training. It was not to prove that there is another world in the midst of this one but to jar them into the awareness that here were the deeps of life itself.

The second aspect of this Training of the Twelve is more astounding to me. He took each one of those men who walked along behind him and he stuck their noses, literally, into the human suffering that had been around them all their lives, that they had taken for granted. I'm talking about myself, who got far too old before I became being-filled aware of the suffering and the incredible suffering of humanity that I have lived in the midst of all my life. It wasn't enough just to pass a blind man on the way. He halted the troop and stuck their noses into the suffering. It wasn't enough to walk by a lame man. He stopped and stuck their noses into it. It was by no means enough that they walked by the leper's cave. No, he grabbed them all by the ear and dragged them down into the midst of that leprosy until they saw with their own eyes, with their whole being, the suffering of those who were sired by the same father. And later he was to say in his wrathful "Woe oration" upon the establishment, that not only would they not enter the Other World but their woe lay in the fact that they spent their lives preventing others from entering the Other World."

In conclusion, it seems to me that this new way of direct service to the world is the same way that we have always been about, the way of perpetual revolution. We were born in the midst of the ecumenical movement of our time which was a response to the tragedy, the suffering and the awakenment of the

World Wars. It was a movement that forced us to move beyond dialogue. We saw that it was necessary within that movement, to be the revolutionary dynamic and we committed ourselves to a life of intellectual rigor in order to get stated the significance of life in our day.

When we moved into the sixties, we found that we were a part of the freedom movement. We discovered, in the midst of the freedom movement, that we also had a revolutionary role to play. We had to move beyond protest to create Fifth City. A brochure prior to Summer '66 entitled "Beyond Protest" came out of our experience in Selma. I was pregnant when we went to Selma and I found it difficult to march. But the event for me was a huge tent which fell on all of us in a sudden storm. I remember reaching out and screaming for David; he was no where near, and I could touch no one. I became very clear, in the midst of Selma, that this is a solitary revolutionary stance. It was a time of fanatical experimentation with our ritual life.

When we moved into the '70s, we were a part of the broad movement of consciousness. We discovered that we had a revolutionary role to play in the midst of that movement. We had to move beyond consciousness-raising to create incredible signs. We created, during that era, the Religious House and the Human Development Project. The kind of style that was required of us was one of radical expenditure. Now we are moving into the '80s. I think the wave that will sweep through our time is a quest for morality, a quest for a moral stance. We will find that we have to move beyond the 15 and 85 percent articulation of a moral response in our day. We are required to live out of a style of disciplined corporateness. We are going to be called to drag, and I mean literally drag, the structures of society into a relationship with local man. We will have to demonstrate consensus polity. We will have to demonstrate pluriform religion. We will have to "walk with kings and live with the poor". In the midst of this, I think we'll discover what we've always discovered in this business of being the revolutionaries in history, "Our sole defense, our only weapon, is the life of integrity, whether we meet honor or dishonor, praise or blame. Called imposters, we must be true; called nobodies, we must be in the public eye."

THE WAY
of
DIRECT SERVICE
TO THE WORLD

