

PROFOUND AWAKENMENT

This year more than any other I find it awkward to stand up here to give a talk, even on something I really want to talk about, which is true in this particular case. We are all finding it difficult to articulate the profundity of what we have experienced in words that freight a future direction. If we try to say anything that plumbs the depths, we find ourselves thrown into language that points back in another direction, and we are fearful of it. This, of course, has to do with the language, the symbols, and the transition that we find ourselves part of. Perhaps a new language of depth reflection is emerging, but it has not yet broken loose.

The talk I am going to give on mass awakening is not at all the talk I thought I would give. It will seem to touch on the knowing pole from time to time but, to avoid confusion, I want you to know I understand this is a time of doing.

I am going to begin with scripture, which is the last thing I thought I would do. This scripture is familiar because you hear it every year on Missionary Sunday. I'll read it and remind you to move through the poetry of the Christian symbolism to what this scripture is trying to say.

"Jesus then came up and spoke to them and he said, 'Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed to me. Go forth, therefore and make all nations my disciples. Baptise everyone everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you and be assured that I am with you always to the end of time.'"

The most rocking aspect of our own experience this year is that the language of the song "Local Man Shall Rise Again" has become vividly alive to us. Three billion people die and never live. It was great as poetry, but now we have lived it in the villages. We have seen the state of people who have never had the possibility of using their creativity. We have seen people who have been living like dogs. We have seen people who have never gotten their creativity into the decision-making processes, into the art and culture of the world in which they have been birthed. We are rocked by this, more than we dare confess; if we dared confess, we would break down in tears as we talk.

We have a task of awakening. Three billion people die and never live unless the possibility of the good news of awakening is ministered unto them. There are two million villages and an unknown number of cities where people have been cut off from the gifts of the world. "Why go to these poor?" I ask myself, "I do not want to go there." We go to the poor because they are a symbol. They symbolize the encrustedness of social forms that have failed to reveal the possibility of the creativity and the profundity of human life. The poor are the judgement upon the social vehicle that has blocked humanness. We are called to do the task of awakening which allows the flow of profundity and creativity once again.

I have become acutely aware in these last few days of something we've said for a long time: the new society rides on the back of the religious. No one in society will do the awakening job, the task of revealing the Other World in the midst of this world, save the religious. This leads me to say that fundamentally

awakenment is the key. It is our foundational and ever abiding task. We are called to be the evangelists who raise the profound question of life and offer the possibility of living the profound way of life.

I was struck by the observation that the people in Maliwada remember the day of the consult. I'll bet this is true in every social demonstration. They refer back to that date not because of social methods but because it was the time of waking up. Fundamentalists I've met always ask the question, "Have you been saved?" Or, they ask, "When were you saved?" I have always been irritated by those questions but those questions aren't bad. The question might be put today as you go from village to village, from town to town, "When did you wake up?" Sometimes, in bull sessions on the Plaza, we ask each other, "When did you take RS-1?" But the question we are really asking is "When did you wake up?"

The evangelist's task is that of this waking up; that awakenment becomes the marking point which allows human development projects and new forms of education, political, social and economic structures. Without the awakenment, there is no possibility for new forms of those structures in history. There is only patching up encrusted forms which still do not do the job of allowing people to live profoundly in this world.

Our major job is to be the ones who announce the possibility of profound humanness. I am already tired of that word. But I have no other way to talk about it save we are about the task of awakening people to the unsynonymous vision of the discovery of the Other in life. We are about the task of enabling people to see the inevitable link between their heritage and their future. We are about the task of allowing people to see the wonder of the mundanity of their own life. We are about the task of beckoning people into the freedom to risk with courage their own creativity in their village, their home and in the world. That is what profound humanness means to me.

Finally, the perpetual task of the religious is the job of awakenment. This has always been their task. Even when the monks went into the desert they were about the task of rocking the social fabric. The forms change, but the task remains. For wresting profound living out of life is the battle that never ends. I have a new appreciation for what perpetual revolution involves. We are about the task of seeing that the encrusting is constantly shattered so that new creativity can come into being.

As the religious, we are called to be guardians of this task; therefore the awakenment task of the religious is never given to anyone else. If we give Town Meeting away it will be when it is no longer an instrument of the radical awakenment of communities. Someday it may become a methodological tool for the functioning of a new society. Then we will give it away. We will then find other tools to keep alive the awakening task that must be done. We will do all kinds of programs in order to forge the social form that will, for as long as possible, keep the reality of profundity and mystery alive in the social fabric. We know, as lucid people, that every social form will finally become encrusted. We will not do Global Social Demonstration forever. We do it to create a form for putting the elasticity and possibility of depth back into a social form. Then, we shall give that form away and never use it again until another time in history when that form is needed. But awakenment, we will never give away.

That's the "knowing" of it, but doing is part of that too. Knowing is interesting to discuss but it is quite another matter to do the task of wandering down the highways and byways of the world announcing the good news of the possibility of the fullness of life in the midst of this life.

The need for effective maneuvering is what has become clearest to us this year. Maneuvering is not the same as battleplanning and tactical and contradictory thinking. It is something more than that. I do not have my mind around maneuvering but if we are going into the world, we must figure out how we do it, not just talk about it.

Maneuvering has to do with readiness. It involves discerning the trends of the times so you can see where readiness is present, where the word of possibility will be heard and where the beckoning will bring a response -- not simply for the place that responds; but for the total breakthrough.

Maneuvering has to do with our readiness to undertake a task. I am impressed with the number of people and organizations that want us to do something in the cities right now. We are not ready for the cities, not just because of the trends but because we do not have a way to offer the word so that it will, in fact, be heard. Maneuvering has to do with the readiness of the social structures in which we work and, in a related way, with the readiness of the globe as a whole.

Maneuvers have to do with timing, which is related to readiness. Timing involves the force or impact you use when you move to announce the word and to beckon forth the profundity. It has to do with where to set an explosion, creating fallout which allows others to hear and to be beckoned forth. Timing, therefore, includes the question of "where." These are confusing questions but ones that we need to answer.

A third part of maneuvering is the concrete openings available to us. We used to talk about these as the soft underbelly. This has to do with finding the nods that allow moving so that, while we do not run away from crucifixion, we are also wary of suicide. This has to do with broad openings. It is inadequate to talk about one small opening here or there. Are these openings related to openings elsewhere across the globe or is it a superficial opening of simply one moment in one place that will kill us in the long run if we are not careful? I am talking about the hole in the line that is history-long and world-wide seen from the perspective of maneuvering, from acting. At the end of the year ahead, we might be able to collect our wisdom on how to maneuver as we have done for the past few years in the arenas of tactical thinking and battleplanning.

Fourth, maneuvering has to do with troop formation and troop use. It has to do with equipping your troops, and particularly equipping them with the story of why in the world they are doing mass awakening. For two years now the excitement of Town Meeting and our new way of moving into the world has sustained us. This year, we will not be sustained by another series of victories in doing states or counties unless we grasp the profundity of why we are doing what we are doing.

Maneuvering also has to do with organizing your troops in such a way that victory is assured before the battle. We are in a war to win. The instruments of mass awakenment are crucial to history. If we think that RSI was important and Town Meeting is interesting, then we are sorely misled by what is at stake in the social process.

What about this particular moment? I would call it "the fullness of time." At this moment, mass awakenment is possible. Mass awakenment is not always a possibility in other times because of unfavorable trends or unreadiness. In those periods, you do a different kind of awakenment.

The revolutions of our time and the yearning for profundity have made mass awakenment a possibility now. We keep hearing about those revolutions. Several have mentioned the women's revolution which all of us are part of. We are ready and society is ready for that radical move. We are taking part in the awakenment of the minorities revolution, and interestingly, the historical churches have made this a priority this year in their work. There is the third world revolution and the revolution of the youth. I was amazed that 14-year-old students in the Maliwada Replication School are becoming part of auxiliaries to invest their being in social change. There is a revolution in new forms and style of education that equip people for life today. It is hard to believe, yet all these revolutions are happening and the yearning is there. Underneath all these, of course, is the rise of local man.

These trends are happening and we have the tools to respond to them. I will not deal with the tools except to say that you never freight awakenment as just a good idea. You freight it with tools that respond to the openings, the readiness and the trends. Our tools include the Global Women's Forum, Town Meeting, the ITI, Venture 21 for youth, and the educational intern models. Can you imagine students going from the university to a social demonstration, then returning to finish their education. They will never be the same. That is awakenment; never being the same again. If we did not have consults, we would have invented them. The consults rocked the very bottom out of the guardians and it was that which finally created the profundity of the guardian network.

In the fullness of this time, our task is to move massively with the awakenment. The urgency is this: we never know how long the opening will last. You see, readiness is an amoral category. It has to do with readiness for anything. At the point of readiness, people will grasp for whatever is available. The critical issue, therefore, is whether the forms to provide full humanness will be heard or whether some ideology or reduced vision will prevail. We have the awesome responsibility to see that those things which allow depth profound humanness and a possibility for social change be offered.

Although it was glorious this year, awakenment is hard work. It will become even harder as we struggle with why we are doing it. The urgency of doing it effectively and rapidly will become even more impressed upon us. We will run into the enemy in doing awakenment, for there are those who have a vested interest in the encrustment of society; call them demonic if you will. They are not passive; they actively fight life. Some of you have run into them this year.

I will conclude with the statement that ends most of our talks, but it is still true. The religious always die bringing awakenment; they are always crucified for the sake of wresting the Other World into the life of this world once again. We are called in the fullness of this time to bring that life out of death and at the same time, not to be surprised that it probably does mean our death.