

2605

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE YEAR

We can trust in the Lord. People have been saying that for centuries, but I am just learning those words are not just a saying, but a biteable reality. God will supply your needs as they come up. But he is not much interested in supplying them in advance. No, he supplies them moment by moment so you can dare to live believing He never leads you into any trials, and He never prepares a way for you to go through those trials.

As for our spirit journey, I am deeply grateful for this past year. In two areas--the relationship of the interior, or the immediate manifestations of inner history to the exterior happening of life, and the relationship of justification to sanctification--God has provided us well.

Relative to Space, it is Xavierism, a Sanctification dynamic. Without the image of Xavierism, Universal Benevolence becomes terribly abstract.

"By and By" was the breakloose in the area of Time. Some of you were probably not aware that what we called the "Resurgence songs" this summer were originally called the "by and by" songs. These songs foreshortened Time into the present and allowed participation in every moment. We experience this inside as a combination of yes and no, fear and fascination.

Sanctification is nothing more than the words of Jesus turning white-hot in an immediate situation. You experience your life as "no'd" and "yes'd" at the same time. You are no'd and yes'd right in the midst of dread and fascination. You experience your total being absolutely negated and absolutely affirmed simultaneously. That is part of the appropriation of awe. That is the moment a person becomes transparent. You become the yes and the no to all lives and to all of history. This is what we have gone through this year, and it is going to take a long time to understand. Right now we have to look at the consequences.

All year we have been praying for spiritual giants. To use a New Testament figure, some of you children have turned into young men and some of you young men have turned into fathers. There has been some deep inner maturing. I have sensed it in myself, even though I feel like a little child these days--but a little child a thousand years old.

I see a kind of unspeakable courage, a fortitude. The reason Hebrews speak so loudly to me these days is Paul's interpretation, for his time, of how the suffering of the children of Israel in the desert made them men. I doubt there is a person in our midst who has not grown tall in the spirit dimension--if he is still with us in spirit. Secretly you know it about yourself. You see it in your brothers and sisters. We have the capacity to do two impossible things at once, maybe more.

Also, these trials and tribulations in which the Word turned white hot for everyone of us took care of our commitment. You quietly decided as never before that all of your life belongs to God. Or to put it another way, last year we became the religious. Here I stand and I am a religious and I do not know how it happened. It is as if you were resolved, but you did not resolve. Or you decided, but you did not decide. It just happened.

More, we have suddenly grown wise. We have been illuminated. We knew a lot a year ago, but today we know a million times more. It did not seem possible any person could learn as much as we did this summer. We do not know where or how it happened, we just learned. This past year, in the deep spiritual realities of life, we just learned. It is not as if we read any more books--it is that a heavenly light has come. In the days ahead, we are going to have to be brighter than we were.

This year we also intensified corporateness. Some way or another, we have internalized the disciplined life. for a long time we've talked about and wanted a means whereby each of us could become his own man. In a new way, I sense we have it. Of course, we have further to go, both individually and as a group. But something has surely happened to us.

For years we have prayed for showers of blessings and all of a sudden they came. Who even knew it was raining until afterwards when we were all drenched? In our spirit journey, we have gone through the Dark Night, and we will still go through it the rest of our lives. But the consequences of the Dark Night, the blessings of the Dark Night and the fruit of the Dark Night are at hand. I keep asking myself what that means for next year.

I also want to comment on our missional accomplishments this past year. The most important thing we were doing was running religious houses and centrums, recruiting and doing RS-I, and a billion other things like that--things we now take for granted. I am leaving all that out for now, because I want to point to a few things that happened last year in spirit, style, task and polity. All this is consumed under two headings: Mission and the Spirit.

The work we did on Sanctification, both in thinking it through and in creating the new course, is absolutely unbelievable. It might be our one little contribution to theology. I do not mean abstract or systematic theology. That is not our business. Somebody else has to do that. But I believe we have made a contribution to theology by living the way we live--not by our thinking capacity, though I do not want to demean that. One part of our contribution, though I do not really think we are capable of appreciating or understanding it yet, is our recovery of the Mystery in worship. That does not mean we do not have a long way to go. But I look upon that as the outstanding accomplishment of this past year.

Then our recognition of Resurgence. The fact that this group in the past year spotted the resurgence in society and got it articulated is a great contribution to the Church and our time.

As for the Singing and the Cabaret, it will be some time before we understand the importance of singing those secular songs, and grasping the cabaret dynamic in life. We have just begun. Yet those two things were worth the whole year.

Shocking things have happened to our Style. In the past years, it seemed when we did something we had to flex our muscles and shove. This year, it seemed as if some reality beyond us was making use of us. Does that sound odd to you?

You know, for a long time we have seen ahead to the day it would be necessary to wear habits. It was not necessary until we had the Space category, though. "Habit" comes from the word "to have" or "to process." The original word meant "to be inside of" or "to fill up." I suspect every man is lost in Space without a habit. Of course, there are many different types of habits. Well, I look upon it as shocking, as a major accomplishment of the year that we are now in habits. Once you are in a habit, then everything you wear for the rest of your life is a habit. Using the habit intentionally means that your Being is filling the universe itself. This may not seem important to you, but it does to me.

Another item under style is Sophistication. I think one of the greatest miracles I have ever seen is how, in the matter of months (and with a few exceptions, most of them women,) "us farmers" have really done something about Sophistication. We have moved--and part of it is in appearance. I still cannot believe one of our more ruffled members bought a fine looking blue suit, has a nice clean shirt and a very fine looking tie. If you notice I look better these days, it's because I am trying to keep up with him. But I mean more than that. You know why sophistication is necessary? We have moved from Penetration to Formulation, even though we will be doing Penetration for centuries. As we move into the centers of the Church and the centers of the World, we have to look better than we used to. We have to operate with more finesse and poise. I consider our growth in Sophistication one of the outstanding accomplishments of the year, though we know there is still a long way to go.

What is not so visible is the religious style. Now, it is a secular style, as well, though I am unclear exactly how it will be manifested. As I said before, I know I am a profoundly religious man, but I hope I look as secular as my overweight indicates. But I am afraid of feeling religious. I am scared to death about it. I have to warn myself every day. The religious style is somewhat invisible, but it may be the most significant thing we accomplished this past year. I see it particularly in the women. To be the style of the religious for the women is to effervesce. I see this until it almost drives me crazy. The transformation in the presence of our women is that disturbing. And if the particular woman I am thinking of was not such a modest girl, I would have her stand up. Oh, she is not really modest. I expect her to jump to her feet at any chance to show off her new figure, her new hair, her new smile, her new everything. And she is a hard woman. But a kind of softness and tenderness has emerged in her and a style I call "bubbly." When I first knew her, I did not think God Almighty could make her bubble. And she is only one among many in that category. More, and I feel very free to say this, she has become a beautiful woman to me. I am not doing well here, but this is what I mean about Style. It would please me so if one of you women stood up and said, "Joseph, it seems to me in the last year or so you look more like a tall man than I remember." But of course I am not the one to say that.

Style also has to do with what we point to with the word "team." For me, a team is not some kind of an organization, or twelve people sitting around writing lists or washing dishes. A team is an ontological reality. It is the "where two or three are gathered." We have not gotten ahold of it yet, and I am not going back to talking about "spiritual cells." But where two or three are there, I am there... Jesus

Christ is there. There, Universal Benevolence turns into reality. While I know I am an unrepeatable person, I also know Sanctification is always sociological, never individual. So, as the unrepeatable person I am, I only participate in Sanctification where it is manifest--where two or three are gathered. There is the expenditure I must embrace. Only where two or three are gathered is Jesus Christ Love manifest. Only where there are two or three is history changed. Sometimes we carelessly boast we, individually, change history. That is nonsense. Only where there are two or three--only with Jesus--is the bend of history: Jesus Christ. Though it may take us five years to get perspective on our experience as teams, last year was crucial in helping us formulate it.

Now, I have an announcement. Men and women, we got around the Turn. That is the most important thing. We have bodies sitting here in these chairs. We got around the Turn. If God would not take it as boasting we ought to sing the Halleluia chorus. Perhaps I had better (for fear of God listening) say that God got us around the Turn. That is by far the most important thing we did all year.

We also got the international program turned--and that was with the grace of God raising up giants in the lands other than ours. That has turned us. But no hurry, no hurry at all. Probably the most important thing about our international turn is the giant steps we have made toward becoming global beings ourselves.

This is still largely invisible, but I am convinced it is there and will show up in a hundred ways. I do not suppose you can over exaggerate the fact that LENS was launched and circled the globe. When some of you write our history one hundred years from now, that will go down as one of the crucial events. Not in itself, though. If LENS is not a fundamental instrument of evangelism to the pure pagan then I am not much interested in it.

It was painfully clear this summer that the Spirit Movement is launched, something we suspected a summer ago. But I doubt those are the right words. Something happened to these people between the time they left Summer'72 and when they came back this July. I think the most important work of the Religious Houses last year--and they may say this unabashedly to themselves--is the indirect work that made the difference in the summer participants between July'72 and July'73. This is a serious thing I am trying to point to. These people were not only different at the end of this summer, they were different when they arrived. That is sobering.

Probably the biggest perplexity we face in the long run is deciding whether to be a catalytic power, perhaps related to something in history like the Renaissance, or to be an historical force--something like the Muslim hordes. That is the long-range decision we will have to make. And if we do not make it, it will be made for us, one way or another. Last year was crucial in that area. You must not take this analogy seriously, I am not trying to compare us with anything. When you use the term "renaissance," it is so difficult to understand the core of "nothing" that caused that unbelievable change in history. If you think for awhile, you can recall some names associated with it, but it was a catalytic power that caused the change. We would not be sitting here now if that pincer movement of the Muslims going around the Mediterranean sea had met. They changed history. To contrast the Renaissance and the Muslims, one was a hidden power; the other an overt force. It is not a question of which is legitimate; there is not moral issue involved. Nor is one better than the other, nor one more obvious. At this moment, I could not say which way we are going to go. History will decide for us if we do not.

Something also happened to us this year in our polity. We made a long, long move towards going Areal. We made unbelievable strides, though some of you who think going Areal has to do with "one man, one vote" or "you did not let me run something," would not be able to see the strides.

We also have broadened leadership beyond our group. This is pointing to a new direction. Last Saturday, we had a group of ten guardians: bankers, millionaires, businessmen, to help us with our investments. And that is only the beginning. I hope by the end of September, they come from all over the United States, and we will have a group of lawyers together to let them deal with our legal necessities. One group after another will play the role of movement guardians. I suppose by now we have two hundred strong colleagues. Tomorrow we may have two thousand. What we are doing is broadening leadership. I do not even like the word leadership, because I am not interested in leaders, but in dynamics. The guardians give us a much wider group of people bearing responsibility for crucial decisions--as consultants.

In polity, we have gone a long way toward going global. Wouldn't it be something if the people who have to assume responsibility for the decisions in the Order when the council is not in session would be these fifty-four priors from around the globe? Perhaps we would go the way of the Mormons: pick out twelve of the fifty-four to be first among equals, maybe four in each of the three spheres. Maybe there would just be four. Wouldn't it be interesting if at places like Centrum, you had Panchayats, then quaterns in area houses and troikas in regional houses? We have moved way down the line in our experimentation with polity. No hurry, but I think it's coming along.

My last point has to do with our summer's invisibility. I am not trying to analyze the summer; I am trying to look down underneath it, to the foundations. In the summer, there was a series of things--like the songs, those little cardboard rectangles, the Cabaret, the decor which invisibly spun the Resurgent presence within each of us. It did not create anything new in people; it stirred up what was already there. When I told this to a psychiatrist, he was so excited I thought he would come loose at the seams.

Then, we provided a series of images for the spin we induced. The images--The Dark Night of the Soul, the Sanctification lectures, the John I study, the new course, all enabled the participants to possess the spin within themselves.

Then we offered these people the structures and the task which allowed them to turn this dimension of life into sheer creativity. I suppose that is the reason the participants did not appear to be working much in comparison to other summers. Yet, they turned out the best work the Movement ever turned out. That is because the happening of the summer was released into sheer raw creativity. The important thing this summer was the lack of tight structures. We didn't have everything precisely spelled out, and that allowed things to get produced. We also began the journey from No. 1 pressure point--Myth to No. 9, which is Local Consensus. Actually, you have to put eight and nine together so you combine Direct Action and Local consensus. Together, these are the Resurgence of Man at the local level. These, and nothing more.

Frankly, I did not think the people in the Uptown 5 Lab would come off. I do not lie to you. I thought we were going to have to find a way to fake it and pick them off the street without them ever knowing they had failed. And with gratitude beyond words, I believe what we describe as training was done in Uptown, as well as to the people who were here this summer.

Now that means this summer was an exercise in the magic of Dr. Lao, taking any local hunk of this world and, in a miraculously short period of time, begin to see the spinning that manifests itself in social creativity. All I'm trying to say is WE CAN DO SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT TOWARD ENABLING A NEW SOCIAL VEHICLE ACROSS THE GLOBE. And this summer, we saw the magic that allows it to come into being.

--Joseph Mathews--