

THE NEW WORLD FUTURE

I suppose you have noticed how painfully funny life can be. As one of those things called an Area Prior, I have attended all of these Guardian Meetings, feeling sort of like a fifth wheel, but wanting to make a contribution. Now that the opportunity is here, there are several places on earth that I would rather be.

I remember some speakers in another era who used to tell jokes. People said they did that to loosen up the audience, but what they were actually doing was trying to get themselves loosened up enough to go on. We never used jokes much in this outfit, but a couple of years ago, jokes started appearing here and there in the Movement. One of the North American priors told this one:

This fellow from the country came into the city, went to a pharmaceutical firm, and asked for a job. He was told he could sell toothbrushes. He went out the first week (even though his employers didn't like his looks much) and sold thirteen toothbrushes. His employer said, "Why man, don't you understand the volume has to be much greater than that? Maybe you really are not suited for this work." He asked for another chance and so they sent him out again. When he came back this time, he had sold thirty-one. They said, "Well, I guess we are just not getting our point across to you. The margin of profit is very low so you have to have fantastic volume." He pleaded for just one more chance, went out and came back saying this time he had sold three thousand six hundred and two toothbrushes. This time they said, "Why, that's a record, what in the world did you do?" Well, I went out to the airport where the people were streaming in off the planes and I set up a refreshment table. I had some punch and chips and dip there. People would come by, take some chips and dip and say, 'That tastes like horse manure!' and I would say, 'It is. Do you want to buy a toothbrush?'"

We used to have a pastor in my home town who would tell jokes in his sermons. When he didn't get enough laughter he would say, "Go home and look in the mirror if you want to see a real joke." That is really my whole speech.

After spending most of my forty years working extremely hard to keep everybody serious, I have discovered that life is a joke. At this point, I can imagine my wife is thinking "Oh no, it's finally happened." She is probably trying to figure out some way to get me offstage.

In the dictionary, there are a lot of definitions for a joke. One of these states that it is "something which did not present the expected challenge." That is the way life has been given to all of us in our times. All of the fantastically serious notions I used to have about why the world could not possibly win are gone, every single one. Later I want to spell out some of the ones the death of which I believe is rather decisive for us all.

I used to be so glum, serious and philosophical but I know inside myself that I am a new man. (Perhaps a little of the seriousness and pessimism has carried over.) I fully believe that what has happened to me has happened to you, Guardians, otherwise, I would not even dare to talk about what has happened to me. I also believe that it has potentially or at least unconsciously, happened to every single human being on the face of the earth.

Take the categories of the LENS course, and ask what is going on in each of them. There is a new man. There is a sociality there. There is a fellowship which you do not have to search for, or create - it is just there.

I discovered that fact a couple of days ago. One of my colleagues, who happens to be black, got very drunk the other day. Actually, he let his self-depreciation get the best of him, and said he was tired of being put down and snubbed by people, so he went out and laid one on. He came back and began creating a disturbance. When I went to ask him to come in and talk with me, he had a bowl of spaghetti in his hand. We talked for awhile and I was so successful in dealing with him that he threw the bowl of spaghetti at me. You never saw such a mess in all your life. You can sentimentalize this, but a little later we walked down the hallway together with a new kind of fellowship. A few years ago you could not have convinced me that such a thing would have been possible but something new has happened to us. This happening is the emergence of a globality of the heart, and we no longer really need all those courses on the differences between and cultural origins of black people and white people.

I am also happy to report, as far as I can tell, that sexuality has survived. It has survived women's lib on the one hand, or men's lib on the other and that neither/nor, or so-called gay lib. It has also survived the terrifying amount of nudity seen on the news stands. As far as I am concerned that nudity has nothing to do with streaking. Of course, since some silly characters out at White Sox Park stripped off their clothes and just sat in the stands, streaking is over. There is mystery in real streaking. I myself have not actually streaked except in my soul. You may say that this statement is elementary but I believe we are going to have men and women. There was a time when you would not have been able to make that statement. For instance, you could walk down the street behind two people, thinking they were both male or female only to discover that they were man and woman, unisex style. Unisex still is a serious proposal for some people. I believe, however that ontologically the male/female dynamic is an experience of the other, the radical other in life. This dynamic is crucial to humanness and somehow, by the grace of God, it has been rescued. I think you can even have clergymen and clergywomen in the same family. My wife and I have developed a new routine in dealing

with other clergy folk: I offend them and she apologizes. The first they need, the second they want.

I never dreamed I would live to see the day when the generation gap was overcome, when we would have authentic life phases. I have two boys in Phase I (one is almost eighteen and the other is twelve). I never dreamed that experience would be possible. Phase II might be most difficult to be now, but I am looking forward to Phase III. I believe it must be one of the most productive periods in a person's life. There is something ontological in the old cliché that life begins at forty. However, the most exciting phase these days is the elder phase. I am particularly happy that my parents are here this weekend. They are temporarily living on the West Side. We had been talking about having the old folks come and live with us for a long time. We wanted them to be guardians who would help us out, yet not have to participate in all the structures, which, if they did, they'd never get any work done! George is West Side's Superintendent of Engineering, and my mother is the chief Interior Decorator. We give them free housing, right along with the rats and cockroaches. They are also welcome to eat the food. I am sure they appreciate that the people who prepare it make up in spirituality what they lack in sanitation. Then if they work hard for a week, they get to work on the social process triangles for forty-two hours on the weekend. I never would have dreamed it would be possible for any of my relatives, let alone my mother, to come and participate. Of course you know that possibility has nothing to do with the family as such; it has to do with the mission in which we are all engaged.

We have been caught up in just sheer mystery. A short time ago we believed that life was a problem. Gabriel Marcel says, however, that life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived. That realization has broken in on us. We did not bring that awareness about, nor can we claim credit for it. It just happened.

It is crucial that we not forget the instruments by which this awareness happened. I want to say to us as Guardians, "Extra ecclesia nola salus", which means "outside the church there is no salvation." I used to think this meant that you got everyone into that thing called the church, but I was wrong. It means that without the primordial dynamic of the church there is no social reformulation. Social reformulation always rides on the back of the religious orders.

Now if we are going to move into the future, we need some objective clarity on our past. For one thing, it is historically documentable that between the years 1964 and 1968, (these dates are symbolic, but I think pretty accurate), a new context was established in the mind of the people of this planet, especially this continent. There was a change, to use Teilhard de Chardin's category, in the theological noosphere. There was a mutation in the ecclesiological consciousness in these four years. Although there were other factors involved, the vehicle of that change is symbolically called "RS-I". RS-I is not really a course, but a happening. For anyone who attends RS-I -

whether he has three PH.D.'s or never saw the inside of a school, whether he is a millionaire or has nothing at all of this world's wealth - it is the only opportunity I know of, to say a clear "yes" or a clear "no" to an authentic description of life itself. It is funny, a joke, how one creates that happening. The first step is the First Teacher seeing that every cup handle goes in the same direction (and you never succeed unless this step is done). The church had not thought of that discipline in a long time. Do you remember the clutter, the unintentionality, the glaring messes that were present in the churches we attended? If you rented a room in the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago to do something serious and it looked like most church rooms do, you would blow your stack. The Church has not remembered such things for a long time. People get irritated in RS-I when someone has to go to the bathroom and the teacher heads him off, suggesting that he go to the bathroom during the break. The teacher does not really say it but you know he is thinking, "This person has the fantastic capacity to hold his water until the next break." Most people think you are supposed to do just whatever strikes you. The sort of practicality shown in RS-I had not been heard of for a century or more in churches.

A bunch of crummy people went out across this continent and this world with something called RS-I and provided an exposure to the profound lucidity that is in every single human being. You never claim to teach anybody anything in RS-I -- only to reveal to a person what he knows but is always hiding from. There is no possible response to the descriptive proclamation that RS-I is, except "Glory, Hallelujah!" or "Bullshit!" The first one gives you life and the second gives you terrible death.

We found out a little later that profound lucidity opens up the possibility of radical integrity, of saying "yes" to every moment of life, no matter what its imagined content may be. Once a person is conscious of his own profound lucidity, his own ability for radical integrity, he is never the same again. That is the importance of these courses. The Church used to shed tears over those who never had the opportunity to hear the Word proclaimed. Anybody who participates in that course experiences a transformation in his lucidity and his integrity. This transformation is not possible anywhere else. Creating the vehicle of that transformation was done well enough that there has been a change in the theological mindset of a continent and of the world. To say it another way, the Christ Word became transparent.

In the next four years between 1968 and 1972 there was new spirit. The springs of eternal humanness itself were let loose. If you were not around at the time you can not imagine what life was like. Again, it was rather funny. I remember when we used to lie down under the table, experimenting with the Solitary Office. Guests would come in and go out quickly. I remember one of the first Odysseys. The Religious House had a strange time design in which at three o'clock in the morning they were singing and so on. The neighbors called the police. The policeman came to the door, and here sat the participants in their monks' robes reading the Bible. The policeman looked them over and said, "Well, I can't see anything wrong with reading the Bible," and left. That really happened.

That experimentation is what the Established Church was unwilling and unable to do. I was talking to a seminary dean in Dallas recently. He summed up our role in history better than anybody I have heard. He said, "I want you to go back and tell your colleagues how much we appreciate what you are doing, because your group is doing things some of us in the Establishment are not in a position to do."

In those years the experience of what we would call transrational freedom happened. I mean we were talking about being "spirit." Did not the word "spirit" make us want to vomit the first time we used it? But we began experimenting with the image of being detached from everything in the world. Sitting there in the Odyssey, we started to realize that life is not in my mama, or my children, or in my job, or in anything in this world. Now this realization has happened to everybody. A little later, we saw that experience was really endless fulfillment. Life forever and ever means you already have life. Life is not something else you reach for, but it is whatever is given. That realization allowed all the religious houses to come into being. Not organizational cleverness, but the breakloose of spirit allowed people to go out and do the impossible over and over again. During the experience, the Holy Spirit became transparent.

In this four year period between 1972 and 1976, there is new community in the world. Somehow you never could quite say that community had actually come until December the 15th at the 5th City Decade of Miracles Celebration. Present there was actual grassroots reformulation. But the experience we thought would be pure ecstasy was not what we expected. It turned out to be inescapable contingency. I remember one night I was walking across the street in 5th City, and the biggest rat I had ever seen almost ran over me. Before I could think, I said, "I quit, I'm leaving. If one of those things were to get me in the corner of a room sometime I would die of fright." Can you think how many rats there are in the world? Am I to be sent to one of those places along the road to the Bombay airport, where the water stands two feet deep all the time, and there is every kind of disease you could think of in the world? As fragile as I am, as a healthy Westerner, you are going to send me there? If that is what it means to have real community happen in history, the sense of contingency is just overwhelming. Yet we are saying, "Community reformulation in every parish." Do you grasp the significance of that statement? It's wonderful to say 5th City: Chicago has come off; sixteen blocks it was and now it is twice that many. How much of the world does that leave? Of course, we have a project in Oombulgurri and so on. Now we also have all these embryonic Guilds around North America. But, every parish? I would like to join a movement that has reduced goals. Mark you, that is where the sense of contingency come from; not from the little rat, but what he represents: all his colleagues, four-legged and two-legged, in the world, who must be dealt with. That cry, "Every parish" is the gift of universal benevolence. The gift is total responsibility, and it is joyous, because no one is willing to give his being to anything less than the whole world. In this encounter with the world, the very reality of God is being made transparent.

What emerges from this process is a new cleric. The significance of my participation a number of years ago in the North Shore Cadre was that they laicized the clergy. In those days, I mean I was clergy. It did something to me when the cadre would do those rituals, and one of those fellows would say, instead of Amen, "I'll drink to that." (He always had the equipment in hand to do it, too.) I would not be here today had it not been for that experience. But of course there was a little clericalizing of the laity in that situation, too. Those characters could not get over that some of our colleagues who could have been anything on earth they wanted to be, decided to be clergymen - not really clergymen, but the religious.

This decision is what makes us important: the presence of a religious raises questions in the minds of secular people, and gives them the opportunity to be the religious, too. I consider that, as Guardians, we are religious guinea pigs on behalf of all mankind. We do so on behalf of fantastic people, whose names we do not yet know, who will make the things we have done so far look like absolutely nothing. We can even look forward to the day when the People of God will become transparent in history.

There are certain issues which have been once and for all settled, which have never been settled before and their settlement enables us to be radically free for the future. We have come to see that the Other World is the real world, and This World is the appearance. To be specific, rationalism as salvation is finished. (That statement may sound negative, but I believe it is quite positive.) Ever since Aristotle and even before him, Scientism has maintained that if we finally could achieve the proper manipulation of the particulars of the earth, we would control the mystery of life.

I read in a magazine article about N.A.S.A. how all the moon rocket equipment has weeds growing around it. How did we decide as a nation to get to the moon in nine years? We thought we might find something up there that would somehow relieve us from really dealing with the earth. My Lord, how we hoped we would find something up there that we had not found before. If we could see any creatures there the first thing we would ask is, "What shall we do? Tell us, now." We finally have taken Einstein seriously enough to know that when you look around the universe you can see the back of your head. Go out in space, and what do you find? Space. You find all these things like the moon which are simply bare. Then you see this incredible thing, out in space, with water and green grass and people on it, and you know now that there is nothing else in the world like it. All the Sky Lab astronauts talked about this experience. One of these astronauts has become a physhologist, having experienced some strange mutation of his own consciousness. He said that, in Sky Lab, the earth is so beautiful, with no artificial distinctions. He said he would like to take a politician up and say that there was no use looking up there for there is nothing but dust. The quote is actually: "Just look at that earth, you s.o.b." That exclamation is exactly what happened to the moon program. Its final result was, "Look at that, you s.o.b." When are you going to take responsibility for this fantastic planet, earth?

Those N.A.S.A. people should have a good time in the LENS course. They don't have to blow their brains out over the question, "Why are we here?" We are here to be earthlings. You look at the universe, all the nothingness and all the dust and you say, "Well, here I am. Here I am. How could anybody have a boring or unhappy day? To imagine all the possibilities of already not being here and I am still here! And after all the possibilities of not being here after I got here, I am still here." Of course, the crucial fact is, the last fat lady has got to understand the glory of being on earth, the exhilaration of living in the Land of Mystery. How she does not understand, today. On the subways and on the street corners, she has been cut off from understanding. We are all about unblocking the world to let everyone understand the glory of being alive.

The second thing is, not only scientism is gone, but mysticism is gone forever, too. Throughout all man's history he has thought maybe there is another place, maybe there is a way to escape, to identify with being. This is what the youth thought; with the aid of hallucinatory drugs they thought they could get out of this wicked old world, and be with being. I do not mean to be facetious, but they got hepatitis, they got gonorrhea, they got insanity, and they got death. That is one way to get grounded in this world, after all. In the Exorcist craze people thought that maybe, there was something else. Even the Academy in Hollywood understood you could not say "yes" to that idea, and still have civilization. Heaven is authentic earthly participation. The excitement of contingency, as I have tried to say, is living out of the righteousness of faith: that is, betting your whole life that this world as what the Other World is in, is it. This world is worth it.

Thirdly, Socialism is dead. Socialism may not be quite the right word. A Unitarian clergyman was at our place the other day, and he talked about "his Marxism." Where has he been? He said that if we had the right kind of institutions, we would not have to deal with people as individuals at all. He just refuses to have the way things are. Have we not seen, once and for all, that although structures need to be one way and not another, that finally we never escape the personal dimension of care? Corporateness, not corporationism, is what I mean. Corporateness channels individual care, and gets everybody's gift out into history in such a way that it helps everybody else.

Then the last thing which is gone forever is Psychologism, the notion that, somehow, in the manipulation of feelings through the clarification of experiences, life will be whole. As far as I am concerned, talking about your problems is in the category of not letting sleeping dogs lie. We have got more people in trouble because somebody helped them get their problems out in the open. A counsellor gets a little group, and everybody vomits out his problems so everybody else can look at them and say, "We never saw any just like that before." Or, when somebody is reluctant to get his problems out in the open, you have permission to run your psychological arm down his throat and gag him until he gets his out. That is wrong. That is not what life is all about. I do not care what my mama did to me. She did some terrible things, but do not tell me about it. The psychologistic approach to life is supposed to save us.

(Anything you give fifty dollars an hour for is certainly supposed to save you.) We know from the Other World standpoint that every experience, past, present, and future, is simply the gift that it is. Every experience is eternal reality, because it is what it is and not something else. The business of wishing that life were some other way is really gone forever, because genuine tranquility has come upon us.

Because there is a new man, brought into being by what has happened in the new church and resulting in a new world for us to work in, there is a new future that we have no way of doing any more than glimpsing at the moment. 5th City, I believe, is in the political dimension of this future. Local man has started to determine his destiny again. He is starting to care. If Lela Mosley were President of the United States, local man would be remembered. (I am not recommending that, since we need her in 5th City.) The ecumenical parish is going to happen everywhere. Because 5th City has come off in Chicago it can come off everywhere else. Between now and 1976 I think we are going to see those parishes blossom in a way we are not able to imagine.

In the economic realm, wouldn't it be great if something were to happen in a place like Proctor and Gamble? They say they have a product in every home in America, and that is probably not much of an exaggeration. Wouldn't it be great if the significance of work could be recovered and we could have an ecumenical work ethic instead of a protestant one. Do you know what ecumenical means? It means "all of mankind." Would it not be great if even the President of the company as well as the custodian saw himself as working in his company on behalf of all men? That can happen. Studs Terkel has a new book out on working people, in which a young woman is quoted as saying "A monkey could do what I do." (The president of her company is probably saying that no self-respecting monkey would do what he has to do.) Where a person expends his energy must be part of global humanness.

Thirdly, I believe that in 1976, there is going to be a cultural celebration. There is going to be a Global Council of the Spirit Movement. I do not know if it will be in North America or where it will be, but it is going to be something you have never seen before. This will be the first authentic global council of people working on behalf of all mankind. It is a first in all history, because never before was it possible to have one. We did not have the technology, nor the breakthrough in the mindset, the spirit and the local community.

This sounds funny, but that is all right. We can go away from here in a state of what I am going to call "humania." The dictionary says that "mania" means "excessive excitement." We have the great opportunity to go away from here in a state of excessive excitement about man. Why, yes: humania.

-- Charles Moore