

Daily Office Witness - 17th North American Guardians Consult
(October 13, 1979)

My name is Gary Drown. I'm a Guardian from Carmel, Indiana. (That's a suburb of Indianapolis.)

Professionally, I'm an Actuary. Roughly translated, that's an "insurance engineer".

My secular occupation is a life insurance company executive.

My historic-church affiliation is United Methodist -- layman.

The convergence of all that is something like this:

I'm a religiously secular, locally grounded but globally conscious, technically-trained business generalist, who participates in the marketing of financial care structures, but who's vocation is to be part of the church (a la H. Richard Niebuhr) in the last quarter of this 20th Century.

That is, I don't experience myself -- when I'm self-conscious about it -- as either "a this" or "a that".

Rather, I experience myself -- my life -- my situation -- as ONE thing which has a BOTH/AND aspect to it: Not an either/or.

Like many of y'all here, I've been on my Spirit journey -- my self-conscious participation in this particular manifestation of the Spirit Movement -- for over a decade.

It's been a long march; sometimes three steps forward & two steps backward. At times, it's even been three steps forward and three -- or four -- steps backward!! In general, however, it's been an experience of increasing integrity. That is, it's been a "convergence" of the Both/And aspects my life into that composite oneness of mind & intent we sometimes dare to talk about under the rubric of Chastity: Willing one thing.

I launched into this Way, back when we talked about the Doing Pole of our triune movement as the "Action Centrum". Some of you remember that?

We weren't sure what our Act needed to look like; but we knew it had to be there.

I was in one of the 2nd-round Galaxies (Clusters) of local congregations participating in the Local Church Experiment from 1971 - 1974.

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I guess it was then I learned something about that life dynamic we more easily talk about as "Obedience" -- or maybe "Corporateness", i.e., obedience to the corporately consensed upon vision & necessary deed.

And, as others of you who similarly participated in the LCX will remember, the "crunch" came when we tried to do the Parish. We had a fine set of tactical maneuvers all laid out for us by the Summer '70 Global Research Assembly.

But, they were not only contentless; they were amorphous, -- without form. We didn't know how to practically do Forum and Stake and Guild. So, we had to invent some form for our rightfully contentless tactics.

That's when I struggled to learn about Poverty -- that is, detachment from my local arena of love's labor. From 1974 till now, the World has been our Parish laboratory. Like you, I've done Town Meetings; I've participated in LENS -- back even when it was called NINS; I've worked in at least 3 North American HDPs; I've enabled Global Women's Forums, Community Youth Forum; etcetera; etcetera; etcetera!

All of these have been absolutely crucial to our learning to do mass awakement and effective engagement. Now, I sense convergence coming down at the pole of the Global Servant Force.

I suppose there are some here who won't agree with what I'm now going to witness to. That's O.K. If you don't agree, then don't say the "Amen" at the end!

Thru-out all this shifting of missional emphasis over the past decade, what has sustained me in the long march & the dark night has been the WORD as rearticulated in our Religious Studies-I Course.

That's what launched me onto this journey.

Rehearsing it again, & yet again, is what has motivated quantum jumps in my decisional commitment to our Doing all along the way.

And RS-I -- or its essence, whatever its form -- is what has sustained me in the mission when the "excitement" of New Doings wears thin and Stoic determination or Hedonistic care-less-ness begin to strain at my decisional barriers.

But what I've noticed about myself, I've also noted about others. I don't know how it is where you're dying your death; but in the hunk of turf we call the Indianapolis-Louisville Bi-metro, my observation has been that only those who've had RS-I or been to Academy are on the Way with me.

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Contrariwise, those who've been awakened by one of our impact courses and dared to dabble a bit in what we're about are generally not on the Way -- UNLESS they also were addressed by that life-giving & sustaining WORD -- thru RS-I, the academy, or otherwise.

Now as one trained in mathematics, I'm well aware that I've not delineated the necessary & sufficient conditions for a rigorously determinable conclusion. But I also know that mathematics is an abstraction; and that authentic human Knowing is both rational and intuitive.

There are some who'll claim our Global Servant Force is growing. That may be; but I believe the objective data will indicate otherwise for North Americans.

(This is the North American Guardians meeting isn't it?)

In our Bi-metro, we've done at least one RS-I each teaching quarter for the last 4 years. We did one last month (technically the Summer Quarter of this year); and we have another one scheduled for yet this fall. But this quarter we've also done 6 Town Meetings, a CYF, a GWF, while having weekly Polis Cadre meetings in 3 polis -- and, not to be overlooked, we hosted the Metro Circuit Development Team for a week.

The last thing I'm here to do is boast about anything. I think St. Paul had a similar dilemma in trying to present objective indicatives of effectiveness. I'd simply put our results up against any other Bi-metro in this continent.

My point, rather, is that our mission is NOT either secular or religious, it's both. Our Academy curriculum certainly indicates this: It's CS and RS -- both. And, in our Bi-metro, we've been demonstrating that it is possible to do both. Indeed, we believe it's absolutely crucial to do both -- so much so that if we don't do the Religious side, we'll finally fail to do the Secular!

My vision is that the times are ripe for doing something like RS-I. The Pope's visit here amply demonstrated that ripeness of time. The emphasis will be different than 10 years ago. The participants' spirit struggle will be different than before. (We probably need a new movie, too; Jackie Gleason looks mighty young!!) But my experience has been that RS-I and Academy are still THE effective vehicles for conveying the WORD of possibility for any situation -- and staffing the movement.

What scares me about the lucidity of people I meet today is that our Awakening events, alone, will simply drive them into cynicism & despair.

That is, they'll have "open eyes" -- but will they also have "joyful hearts"?

Or, I'm concerned that our flirtation with only the secular will make it hard for me to remember that my operating images are Poverty, Chastity and Obedience; when Position, Power, and Possessions appear equally viable -- and certainly more attractive in my separatedness.

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RS-I and Academy are what's built this movement in North America. The convergence of our Knowing and our Doing is our Being. The WORD is the only thing that will build our Global Servant Force and enable us to take care of ourselves in the process.

A quotation comes to mind from one who's been in my meditative council these past few days. You Lutherans here will readily identify him:

"Here I stand! God help me, I can do no other."

In the name of The Christ. Amen.