

**Subject: FW: Bishop Jim's Address in Vail**

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**From: "John Cock" <jpc2025@triad.rr.com>**

**To: "Grow, N&B" <nangrow@surfsouth.com>**

[Bishop Jim said you did not have this.--john]

-----Original Message-----

From: David Dunn [mailto:icadunn@igc.org]

Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2000 3:26 PM

To: OECommunity

Subject: Bishop Jim's Address in Vail

(Bishop Jim sent this text of his talk in Vail to Betty Pesek, who scanned it and converted it into a word processing document to share. It's my pleasure to pass it along to the listserv. For what it's worth, "Whippenpoof" and "Wiffenpoof" are alternate spellings of the same famous Yale song, and "Toura, Loura, Loura" and "Tura, Lura, Lura" are alternate spellings of the Irish lullaby. David Dunn)

Address to the Order: Ecumenical at Vail

Bishop James K. Mathews - Vail, Colorado, August 5, 2000

First of all, let me say how glad I am to be here. As we reflect in the future upon the meeting of the Order here in Vail, we shall proudly recall:  
<sup>3</sup>I was there.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Crisis and Forgiveness

Of course, I can claim no special wisdom upon the major issue you have discussed here; namely, the inter-generational issue. I share your concern and I am profoundly aware of my own shortcomings in this regard. Again and again I think of how sorely I neglected my own wife and children, while I was absent from them for lengthy periods (busy at <sup>3</sup>saving the world!<sup>2</sup>) Therefore, I am in a position to offer you empathy.

No doubt my brother's name, spoken and unspoken, has surfaced during your discussions. I am fully aware of how deeply he and Lyn were aware of the issue. They suffered from it, as have their sons.

Let me offer one word of solace to you. Last summer I heard a series of lectures by an outstanding American preacher and pastor. During one of his addresses he cited a woman (one of his parishioners) who lamented that her family was <sup>3</sup>dysfunctional.<sup>2</sup> Then he said that in a half-century of pastoral care he had never encountered a single instance of any family which was not dysfunctional! So you have lots of company!

You have thoroughly and frankly confronted this issue. As I say, Joe and Lyn would have joined you in the discussion. There is, however, a point where human beings can do no more. I can hear old Joe shout out: <sup>3</sup>Enough!<sup>2</sup> There is a limit to examining our bowels! There comes a time when the whole burden must be cast upon the merciful Judge of the whole universe!

Speaking of bowels (of <sup>3</sup>spilled bowels<sup>2</sup>) (Joe knew a thing or two about that. During World War II Joe, as a front-line chaplain, went through a number of battles in the Pacific. After each of three battles, he had to bury 700-800 men. After such a gruesome experience, no milquetoast religion for him! He returned to study at Yale Divinity School and to embrace a more solid religious perspective. All that made him the hard, the tender, the passionate, the compassionate person he was. He could be demanding but he demanded and gave everything to the Faith himself. I am sure he would want you to put the past behind you and receive the gift of forgiveness.

Let me recall a personal experience. In September 1998, I was, together with other religious leaders, invited to the White House for breakfast. It was then that President Clinton made a clean breast of the whole Monica Lewinsky episode. He confessed in some detail and sought forgiveness. Then, rather spontaneously, every one present went through two separate impromptu <sup>3</sup>receiving lines<sup>2</sup> and individually greeted both the President and the First Lady. I do not know what others said to the President but, having heard his confession, I offered him absolution: <sup>3</sup>If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.<sup>2</sup>

So likewise I offer you absolution in behalf of all humankind and in the name of the Triune God, Judge and Redeemer of all: <sup>3</sup>Your sins are forgiven you. Arise and unshakably walk into a brand new future.<sup>2</sup>

You have, of course, some unfinished business. You may have individually to go to members of the next generation and make personal confession and restitution if so prompted. As representative of Joe and Lyn, I will undertake to do this for their Joe and Jim.\* Then, let there be closure.

## II. Thanksgiving

I do not know of any other observer who has been more aware of the incredible dedication and labor which you here have rendered all around the world. Such was your outreach that every hour of every twenty-four hour day it was high noon at one of the many human development projects that you inaugurated. More often than not you labored in out-of-the-way places, without an audience to cheer you. The magnitude of the price you paid is indicated by the names on the commemorative wall of this room. Most of the time you received no thanks.

Well, I thank you now and in behalf of all! Was it not Dag Hammarskjold who said: <sup>3</sup>For all that has been: ~~E~~Thanks;<sup>1</sup> for all that is to be: ~~E~~Yes.<sup>2,1</sup> There is an indispensable <sup>3</sup>Eucharistic dimension<sup>2</sup> to life. This secret is contained in the central act of worship for Christians. Thanksgiving is rendered unto God for the work of all. It is contained in that spirit song: <sup>3</sup>Those who wait on the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

## III. Stories

Let me turn now to <sup>3</sup>stories.<sup>2</sup> I have heard many told right here in your meeting. As someone said: <sup>3</sup>What else is there?<sup>2</sup>

1.

This is one my brother liked very much. In about 1952, I was traveling from New York's Grand Central Station to Chicago. In my Pullman car there was only one other person. His likeness appeared on the cover of TIME magazine some months ago as the Man of the Century. Finally, I ventured to speak to him, <sup>3</sup>You're Dr. Einstein?<sup>2</sup> With a bit of a smile he responded, <sup>3</sup>No, but a very good friend of his.<sup>2</sup> This was his gentle way of informing me that he did not wish to engage in conversation. What does one say to such a person aboard a train which was speeding toward Chicago, while at the same time we were standing still while Chicago was speeding toward us? So I left him to his private reflection. Who knows; by my restraint I may have contributed to the advancement of science as it relates to unified field theory?

2.

Another concerns John Wesley. You will recall that, <sup>3</sup>Wesley<sup>2</sup> was Joe's middle name. In Western Pennsylvania the bishops of the Northeast Jurisdiction have, in turn, been working with pastors on Wesley's sermons. The point was made with me that surely the sermons were not delivered exactly as they were written. I tried to make the point that they were, in fact, livelier in delivery: that Wesley had a fine sense of humor; that he was good company; that Samuel Johnson, for instance, could not get enough of him. Then one of the ungrateful pastors challenged me to give just one instance of Wesley's use of humor in a sermon.

I took this question <sup>3</sup>under advisement<sup>2</sup> overnight and finally found one. It was this reference: <sup>3</sup>God does not play at Bo Peep with us.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly that is not excruciatingly funny, but for John Wesley, not bad! One pastor responded: <sup>3</sup>Didn't he mean Little Boy Blue?<sup>2</sup> No, unlike Boy Blue, the One who watches over Israel and over us: <sup>3</sup>slumbers not nor sleeps.<sup>2</sup> Nor does God, like Bo Peep, leave lost sheep alone to find their own way home. Rather, God leaves the fold to find the lost one. God found me and you and all who have been ready to be found.

3.

Yet another story is an affirmation of life (I mean Eternal Life. It concerns Justice Harry A. Blackmun of the U.S. Supreme Court, who died on March 4, 1999. His funeral was held in Washington's Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church on March 8 of last year. This proved to be a snowy day, making the streets almost impassable. The service began an hour late and continued for two hours. It was impressive in every way, not least because Blackmun's friend, Garrison Keillor of <sup>3</sup>Prairie Home Companion<sup>2</sup> fame, was present and led the congregation in singing two striking songs, both favorites of the Justice and his wife. One of them was <sup>3</sup>The Whippenoof Song<sup>2</sup> (the Yale Song) this at the funeral of a Harvard Man! The other was <sup>3</sup>Toura, Loura, Loura,<sup>2</sup> the Irish lullaby. How strange (at a funeral!

The more I reflected on them, the more appropriate they seemed to be. For in the Whippenoof Song, whatever its shortcomings, the human situation is accurately portrayed. We are indeed poor little lambs, who have lost our way; we are sheep that have gone astray, and the Lord has laid on him <sup>3</sup>the iniquity of us all.<sup>2</sup> So much for that.

But what of <sup>3</sup>Toura, Loura, Loura<sup>2</sup>? I telephoned a friend who knew Gaelic and asked her the meaning of these words. She surprised me by saying that they didn't mean a thing! They were the equivalent of <sup>3</sup>Tra-la-la.<sup>2</sup> They were the recollection of an Irish immigrant who could recall the tune a grandmother had sung as a child, but could not recover the words. Nevertheless, it was a lullaby, sung before one went to sleep, but with full expectation of rising in the morning! Here was hidden a tremendous affirmation of Easter!

Harry Blackmun was in the minds of his enemies a despicable character. After the Rowe vs. Wade decision, he received more than 60,000 <sup>3</sup>hate<sup>2</sup> letters (all of which he acknowledged.

But what kind of man was he? I chanced to be invited to the unveiling of a marvelous portrait of him by the famous artist, Everett Raymond Kunstler. I told the artist that in the painting the subject's face showed forth an effulgence of striking quality. He was intrigued because this was precisely what he intended. He wanted the fight of the inner man to shine through and it did!

4.

The last story has to do with Zimbabwe where I was bishop in 1985 and 1986. While there I did all I could to build up the morale of the Africans. I would speak about the Queen of Sheba, of the Ethiopian Eunuch, of St. Mark being the first Patriarch of Alexandria according to tradition. I reminded them that although Jesus never did in the flesh visit Europe or America, he did get to Africa! I told them that the greatest Christian thinker since St. Paul was an African: Augustine; that one of history's greatest churchmen, St. Cyprian, was an African; that Tertullian was an African!

Above all, I told them that, centuries ago, God worked a miracle on the northern reaches of the continent (in Egypt. God set his people free from slavery and made them a new nation. This is the story of salvation. I proceeded: God was, I thought, about to work another miracle in the southern extremity of Africa (to set his people free from the slavery of Apartheid. And God has (thanks be to God!

The group present here in Vail can testify that God is still at work in

history; you have been God's fellow-workers. You know what it is to bend and change history!

#### IV. Identity

For a few moments I want to speak of identity. Think, if you will, of Moses and the burning bush. Moses was arrested by this sight. A voice from the Bush responded to Moses's query: <sup>3</sup> I AM who I AM<sup>2</sup> or <sup>3</sup> I will be what I will be<sup>2</sup> or <sup>3</sup> I will be there.<sup>2</sup> God was saying, <sup>3</sup> this is who I am; now Moses: be who you are the person God intends.<sup>2</sup> This was the last thing Moses wanted. It was only when he was willing to be who he was, that he became the person God intended. It is no other with us!

Do you know who my brother Joe was? You do not really know him unless you knew him to be an evangelist. He evangelized me; he recruited me! Of course, he was not a conventional evangelist, but he was a teller and a doer of Good News!

Do I have news for you? You too are evangelists. How do I know? Because of what you have done! Because of what I have heard you say! As I have heard your many reports, I have heard all kinds of good news. You do not have bad news, but good. What you intend, that is what God intends.

Now this I will say: the Spirit Movement cannot be sustained on <sup>3</sup> New Age<sup>2</sup> thinking. Rather it must rest on a solid foundation of incarnational Theology. I have heard in this very room this morning the basic theme of such a theology: <sup>3</sup> In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God....<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.<sup>2</sup> That is incarnational theology!

Recall the inaugural sermon of Jesus at Nazareth in Luke 4: <sup>3</sup> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.<sup>2</sup> (Luke 4:18-19)

Here is God's good news to all:

- The economically disinherited;
- The socially and spiritually disinherited;
- The physically disinherited;
- The politically disinherited.

And a new beginning for all! This is precisely what you have been about in your social development and other innovative programs around the world. So you, so we, are Evangelists Tellers and Doers of Good News. Now don't go out and have new calling cards printed! Your identity is first established in your hearts and minds. Then it will be seen by others.

You are co-creators with the Creator.

You are co-workers with Jesus in his renewing, redeeming, reconciling and sustaining ministry.

You share the work of the Holy Spirit of God to make God our contemporary.

#### Conclusion

Then, what we have called The Wall the memorial wall takes on a new meaning. It is a Middle Wall of Partition. The Wall is down and we are reconciled with God!

\* I have since done this. JKM

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