

On the trip that I was recently assigned to make I gave a spirit spin on the kind of consciousness that has broken loose in our time. As I moved along it took different shapes, but the more I gave it, the more I thought about Kazantzakis' Saviours of God. I am going to attempt this morning to take that kind of consciousness and put it in the context of Kazantzakis. That helps to sort out what kept coming to me on the trip about the work which we've done on man's consciousness in the 20th century. I remember when we studied it one summer. We went through the book a couple of times in some kind of formal study. It really was beautiful poetry then, but it didn't make too much sense to me at many points. And yet I found that when I went back and read through it on the other side of forcing ourselves to articulate what man's consciousness is in our time, it just really came alive. I understood every word that he said!

Now there are four arenas that I'll be talking about: First is Being, Being Itself, Being working through us; second, The Mystery, the fact that The Mystery is everywhere; third, the Presence, the work that we've done with the Jesus Principle, the Jesus style; and finally, Those Who Care, local man.

I want to read some excerpts from Kazantzakis and then spin a bit about it. Listen to this:

Silence means: Every person, after completing his service in all labors, reaches finally the highest summit of endeavor, beyond every labor, where he no longer struggles or shouts, where he ripens fully in silence, indestructibly, eternally, with the entire Universe.

There he merges with the Abyss and nestles within it like the seed of man in the womb of woman.

The Abyss is now his wife, he plows her, he opens and devours her vitals, he transmutes her blood, he laughs and weeps, he ascends and descends with her, and he never leaves her.

How can you reach the womb of the Abyss to make it fruitful? This cannot be expressed, cannot be narrowed into words, cannot be subjected to laws; every man is completely free and has his own special liberation.

No form of instruction exists, no Savior exists to open up the road. No road exists to be opened.

Blessed be all those who hear and rush to free you, Lord, and who say, "Only you and I exist." Blessed be all those who free you and become united with you, Lord, and who say, "You and I are one." And thrice blessed be those who bear on their shoulders and do not buckle under this great, sublime and terrifying secret:

THAT EVEN THIS ONE DOES NOT EXIST!

I think that says in rather powerful poetry the thought that part of the consciousness of every man is received at the center where there is Nothing. There is No-thing, and that No-thing is indeed Awe. That burning awareness has broken in upon man's consciousness around the globe. It transcends geography and it spans time itself. This consciousness just happens in the midst of life, and it just burns you up.

There are just two alternatives, it comes to me: You decide to say "No" to that consciousness, which means that you become a zombie or you become the defiant one, shaking your fist in the face of it and saying, "I will not have life that way," or you decide to go on the Long March. Out of that flows the experience of man everywhere, the experience of his ineffectivity.

This ineffectivity is not before any human construction, and not before any of our models, but that's certainly where it gets grounded. It is our ineffectivity to bring into being the No-thing that exists - a deep, deep sense of ineffectivity. And yet it's practically grounded. Life these days is just so practically grounded, just one detail after another...

One of my silent prayers each morning when I get up is, "Please deliver me from ineffectivity this day." And yet, I am not out into the journey of the day more than five or ten minutes until that is just a given. It is just there. I think this came to me very strongly in the Isle of Dogs Consult. At the end of the Consult we had a fantastic group of local people who were ready to move, and who had decided to bring into being a new community on the Isle of Dogs. They were filled with exhilaration, filled with excitement, filled with their images of possibility. At the plenary in the last session a doctor got up and read a really fine, fine poem that he had written. It was just pregnant with the excitement of possibility and the future that he saw ahead. I found myself thinking in that plenary, "Oh my! He is on the Long March." He would not have used that poetry, unless that is what he had decided to do with his life. I began to think about what would happen during his first few waddling steps out into the brick wall of the Isle of Dogs, how he'd begin to experience ineffectivity the likes of which he'd never experienced before.

And that throws us over against the cruciality of the whole arena of our symbolic life. No one dares, no one can stand for one moment before the No-thing that is Everything without a very intentional symbolic life. It is not possible. And so you know what we're struggling with, struggling together as to just what that symbolic life is going to be. For me - and maybe it's because I'm as old as I am - it's hard for me to see myself participating in any ritual other than the Daily Office. As for the Solitary Office, that comes to me these days with a burning compulsion to get some kind of self-conscious form on it. I can rehearse all the ways I go through a solitary office, and each of has some solitary office that we rehearse, more or less self-consciously. These days I have a compulsion to get some kind of perfect form on that office. Maybe it's the Starets Prayer, "Lord Jesus

Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner." Maybe that's it.

Now let me move on to the next kind of consciousness, the Mystery. The way Kazantzakis says it for me is this:

I believe in one God, defender of the borders, of double descent, militant, suffering, of mighty but not of omnipotent powers, a warrior at the farthest frontiers, Commander-In-Chief of all the luminous powers, the visible and the invisible.

I believe in the innumerable, the ephemeral masks which God has assumed throughout the centuries, and behind His ceaseless flux I discern an indestructible unity.

I would want to suggest that this indestructible unity is the consciousness that what man is over against and responds to in life is the Mystery, the Incomprehensible One. I like very much the story that came back from the Waliwada Consult of the three old men who went out to look for the ancient dams that used to water that brown earth and make it productive, and one of those old men was a Hindu and one of them was a Moslem and one of them was a Christian. And as the story goes, they moved out over the brown, parched land searching for the ancient dams, and simultaneously, each of them fell down a well. And when they got to the bottom, no words were necessary, because they had reached profound consciousness itself. And all that was necessary was to look into one another's eyes. And you know that they knew that what was there was just the Mystery. And each had fallen through the historical poetry of his religion, fallen through all the curtains that mask the painting, the articulation of what it means to live before the Mystery.

And that's where we are struggling, with the practical transparency of the Word. A couple of summers ago we worked on transparency. I'm hoping that this summer we have a task force that picks up on that work and pushes it down on the other side of the new consciousness that has come into our group. What we're talking about in this arena is Christian bigotry, and we might be very careful that we not fall victim to thinking that the poetry which we in the West have created is the only poetry that gets articulated what it means to stand before the Mystery. I was thinking last night of the sociological ramifications Christian bigotry has as we go out to care for the world. For instance, to insist that our advanced technology is what the world needs is a product of the kind of bigotry that is rooted in our depths.

And probably the practical manifestation that gets acted out before the Mystery is the Jesus style. Our recent discussion about moving mountains - when you have faith, you can move mountains - that kind of style gets communicated even non-verbally, what it means to act out the style of to die is to live and to live is to die. Before we left on our trip, I was amazed, or sort of amused. We'd been drawing up four-by-fours relative to what needed to be done, and one part of it was that we wanted to talk on this trip about the Jesus style. And it came out, you know, in things like, Walk Briskly; and that's sort of amazing. I mean, I think that's sort of funny,

that you say Walk Briskly as the style of Jesus, but it's just there with some practical concretions. It does get down to how you walk. It does!

Another one that we had on the four-by-four was to breathe the fresh air of the comprehensive and the futuristic into every situation. Now, that's very practical. It has to do, you know, with the Jesus style. And as I brood on that these days, especially John 14-17, it's so overwhelming that I just want to run. I mean, if you begin to think about Jesus the man, and think about someone saying to you, "You want to know what life is all about? Look at me." Well, who would dare make that kind of statement?! But that is what the Jesus man does. If you want to know what it means to live fully, well, just look at me.

The third is the Presence. Let me read two more verses from Kazantzakis about the awareness of being the Presence. It occurs to me that every man is a presence, one way or another. It's not a decision as to whether or not you're going to be a presence. Every man is a presence, in his situation, in his community. But, be the presence of the Word and Deed in Jesus Christ. Listen to this:

I believe in His sleepless and violent struggle which tames  
and fructifies the earth as the life-giving fountain of  
plants, animals, and men.

I believe in man's heart, that earthen threshing-floor  
where night and day the Defender of the Borders fights  
with death.

I think for me that says very well what it means to be the Word and the Deed. I'm overwhelmed that the one injunction given to the Church was "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." Just those words: "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." That's all there is. And, in doing that task, to be the Deed and to be the Word. And we have had no choice.

It seems to me that for our Order to take seriously that injunction - from the Abyss, from the Universe, from the Incomprehensible One, the Unsynonymous One, the Totally Other - we had no choice except to go global. We are forced as an Order to go to the uttermost parts of the earth, and that's what we're doing in Social Demonstration. I want to submit to you that none of those demonstrations will come off without the fine, 24-hour-a-day presence of the Order. That does not mean, of course, that we are not utterly tainted. But, social demonstration will not come off save the presence of the Order is there: the kind of troops that are under total assignment, the kind of troops that will get up at five in the morning and work until ten at night, and work tirelessly - the kind of troops that aren't afraid to get into the drainage ditches up to their arms in mud and work. Social Demonstration is just utterly dependent on that. The Auxiliary - as we're calling the Order in the Social Demonstrations - is the sign of hope for people.

You should hear the stories in Maliwada, and you can see it as you move through the streets, of the transformed lives and actions of the whole village. The whole village is getting up earlier than it used to, the villagers will tell you, because they're saying to themselves, "If they can do it, we can do it." That Auxiliary is a sign of hope.

One of the lines that went with me on the trip was said at the Isle of Dogs Consult. Someone turned to me and said, "Lyn, you know we really ARE a global presence." That is right -- we are a global presence. The kind of responsibility that puts on our Order is overwhelming. It is a responsibility and it is a sacrifice and it is overwhelming.

If there's anything I would want to say it is that all of these subjects I'm dealing with today are just happenings around the world - the awareness of being a presence - the awareness of standing before No-thing, of having your raw creative freedom on your hands - the awareness of the fact that the Mystery is everywhere. And another one is just Those Who Care, or, to put it another way, Local Man is on the rise.

You know how you know things and yet, you don't know them? Well, I think the trip got it grounded for me once and for all that local man being on the rise is an indicative statement and not an imperative. People really do wake up caring. It is not anything you make a decision about, it's a givenness of the situation in our time.

At every moment of crisis an array of men risk their lives in the front ranks as standard-bearers of God to fight and take upon themselves the whole responsibility of the battle.

Once long ago it was the priests, the kings, the noblemen or the burghers who created civilizations and set divinity free.

Today's God is the common worker made savage by toil and rage and hunger.

It is local man that is setting divinity free. Or it's local man who is deciding to engage in the act of caring. And so, what we are doing as an Order is giving social form to that which is already given. In Social Demonstration, in the PCE, in the formation of the Metro Cadres, in bringing together the Guardian net, what is going on is giving social form to Those Who Care.

Those are the kind of awarenesses and broodings that have gotten thoroughly grounded for me on this trip. I think that the thing it finally depends on - and this where I've been brooding since I got back - is that finally we are called upon to articulate the word and do the deed. And that is finally dependent on election. I mean, either we're elected and say "Yes" to it or we don't. And where it comes to me is when I hear about people

leaving the Order. In the old days that would really send me into a tizzy. I'd run around and have long talks and try to reverse the decision. And sometimes even today I want the decision to be reversed. But, to respond to election always takes practical concretion as you answer the call to be the Word and the Deed. And it's always in some form of corporateness. There is no evading sociality as you act out that election in one community or another. And so, these days, when people decide to leave the Order, there are just certain kinds of consciousness that you want to be sure are there. And on the other side of that, it's just "Blessings." Because finally, the way one decides to act out his election is a very solitary decision, and yet it is always in the context of the corporate.

I want to read one more thing:

I hear the savage cry, and I shudder. The agony that ascends within me composes itself, for the first time, into an integral human voice; it turns full face toward me and calls me clearly, with my own name, with the name of my father and my race.

In this context of the corporate, we are, in my opinion, the new shape of the church. I know that comment has been made many times around here, but I would just want to submit that on the other side of this trip I have a very strong conviction that our Order, in all of our relationships - with the Guardians, the movement and the Metro Cadres - that we are the new shape of the church and that with that kind of awareness rests an overwhelming burden as we move into the future.

How do you pick up that kind of responsibility and dance with it? Because, in the midst of the sheer uncertainty that is always there relative to the direction we are going, I find that ten times a day I begin to have questions about decisions we have made as an Order. Yet in the midst of that, I say to myself that we move ahead, that with ever increasing intensity we bring into being the Social Demonstrations and the Community Forums - that those are the two instruments that we have decided to push into history. And we finally rely on No-thing, we just trust the givenness that if we are not it, then there will be a group of people somewhere - that Being is going to get acted out in the stream of history.

That is the civilizing process, and we have decided to put a very particular shade on it. Other people have made other decisions about what that shade needs to look like, but we have decided that it is Social Demonstration and it is Community Forum, and when that kind of awareness or decision gets made, there comes with it the demand for total engagement.

I keep wondering. I get frightened sometimes that we'll go down by default, that no action becomes perhaps the easiest way out. I don't know. What we know is that our corporateness when we come together is just a matter of life and death. No matter what happens, it is the fact that we get together and go through a ritual and sing a song. And even if that is all there is, it is a matter of life and death, relative to being the presence of the Order in Word and Deed.