

CLOSING: WITNESS

"We are born from the mystery of night into the greater mystery of day." There were two activities that I mysteriously enjoyed this last year without really understanding why until the last twenty-four hours.

One of them was delivering our neighborhood newspaper. We did this walking up and down the street knocking on doors, handing the paper to whom ever we could get to come to the door. Our house delivered about 300 of our neighborhood newspapers. It is not because we enjoyed walking. We are not particularly athletically inclined. Our neighborhood is a typical, inner city ghetto with all of its unfriendly attributes sometimes. The people we visited and delivered the papers to were often hiding behind locked doors with big dogs barking, and many other things which you can imagine. There was nothing in the first instance that made this a pleasurable experience, and yet month by month I found myself looking forward to it, and insisting that I be given an assignment to help deliver the newspaper door to door.

The other experience that surprised me this year was going on circuits. Some of you are aware of the fact that I have a bit of a reputation for doing circuits. There is nothing virtuous about that. But this year I found myself rather enjoying it more than I had before. It is not because I like to drive. I do not like to drive. It is not because it is safe for me to drive because sometimes I fall asleep at the wheel. Nevertheless, I found myself rather anxious to get out of the house. Now, I never loved my wife more. I have never had a better house team or regional team to work with than this year. I was just as anxious to get home as to leave. But there was something about getting out on the road and getting distance on things that was very enjoyable to me. I looked forward to those circuiting trips.

But the profound reason for why I enjoyed some things like that was hidden from me until this conference. Now I came to this council worried. I was worried about our vision and whether or not we could stand before the world and its need which has been our commitment for all these years. I worried about our vulnerability. Although it is true that some places, we have decided, are more vulnerable than others. And there are some configurations that are more vulnerable than others. We are all vulnerable. You and I have seen giants fall on this march, and we do not always know why. I was also worried about our sense of movement, and whether or not we had lost something there.

And so the council started. Everything seemed to me very low key. The music was low key. The procession was low key. There was hardly anybody here, it seemed. I was really struck by the representational nature of this council. The decor was low key. In fact much of it looked very similar to last year. The logistics were low key. We were assigned to create them.

I was rocked by the reminder that this is a representational council. I got to thinking about all the people in the Chicago Area that I was supposed to be representing. That just about threw me under the table. I was rocked by the opening address and the reminder of how vulnerable we all are and how crafty Satan really is. I was rocked by the reports that were given from around the world...stunned really, by what had happened this past year.

The result of all this was that I was thrown into deep brooding and

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forward to it, and realizing that I was given an assignment to help deliver  
the newspaper door to door.

The other experience that I had this year was going to clinics.  
Some of you are aware of the fact that I have a bit of a reputation for  
being a clinic. There is nothing virtuous about that. But this year I  
found myself rather enjoying it more than I had before. It is not because  
I like to drive. I do not like to drive. It is not because it is safe for  
me to drive because sometimes I fall asleep at the wheel. However, I never loved to  
drive; well rather anxious to get out of the house. How I never loved to  
wife home. I have never had a better time than on regional trips to work  
than this year. I was just as anxious to get home as to leave. But  
there was something about getting out on the road and getting distance on  
things that was very enjoyable to me. I looked forward to these driving  
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But the profound reason for why I enjoyed some things like that was  
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I was shocked by the realization that this is a representative council.  
I got to thinking about all the people in the Chicago Area that I was  
supposed to be representing. That fact about three or four million people  
was noted by the opening address and the number of low visibility we did  
and had low energy taken really is. I was shocked by the reports that were  
given from around the world... I learned really, by what happened this  
past year.

The result of all this was that I was a man that had been

solitary. The first nine days of this council seemed to me to be more like a retreat than a council. It was more so than ever before. There were no extravaganzas. I thought the rest of you were behaving somewhat similarly. If I turned away from an exciting conversation for two minutes, the other person had that kind of a glazed look in their eye. And I never quite knew what that person was thinking, but there was something deep going on there.

Then, in the last three or four days there has been a very distinct change, at least in my experience. It did not happen the minute we started the task force work. It happened just when we got closer and closer and closer to the realization that the date we had put on the calendar to call this council to a close was coming on very fast. And we had an awful lot to do.

Folks, we turned up the steam. We turned it on. And you cannot believe...can you believe what we have produced in these last few days? Can you believe the unbelievable consensus that we have forged in these last few days, in the last even two or three plenaries!? We were even capable of staying up late and getting up early.

And also something happened...did you notice those great eruptions of humor in these plenaries, long and hard as they were. Our singing has really blossomed in the last two days. Something has gone on.

I have been given permission to believe again...to believe again that something is about to be given us in history. I had to ask myself why my fears have mostly gone now. My answer won't surprise anybody. But this may be one additional witness to what everybody here knows already.

I came to the conclusion that the tension is with us. The tension is with us. I do not think we could stand where we stand today if we had not had the low key, mundane, retreat-like experience of the first nine days. I do not think we could stand where we stand tonight if we had not had the frenzy, the struggle, the intense dialogue that we have had the last three days. And it is in the tension of those things...I have come to see...that we stand today.

It is in the tension of our solitary brooding and our radical social reconstruction that there is wholeness. And there is healing. And there is that which allows us to stand before the world and its need, that allows us to walk with the world and all of its vulnerabilities, and that allows us to dream again and to vision the world made new, despite our overload of circuits, and our sense of being overwhelmed.

So where I am right now...I am ready to go home. I am ready to get started. Because I believe that this body of people is standing in the tension and is learning to love the tension. That would be my prayer for all of us...that we not only stand there, but we learn to love the tension that is bound to be ours if we intend to stay on this march.

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believe how you believe what we have produced in these last few days?  
Can you believe the unbelievable comments that we have forged in these  
last few days, in the last seven or ten days? We were even  
capable of saying up late and getting up early.  
And also something happened.... did you notice those great eruptions of  
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I have been given permission to believe again.... to believe again that  
something is about to happen in history. I had to ask myself why my  
ears have really gone now. It's almost like a surprise embryo. But this  
may be one additional witness to what everybody here knows already.  
I came to the conclusion that the tension is with us. The tension is  
with us. I do not think we could stand there we stand today if we had not  
had the few days, perhaps, rather than the experience of the first few days.  
I do not think we could stand where we stand today if we had not had the  
struggle, the struggle, the intense struggle that we have had the last three  
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It is in the tension of our solitary preceding and our radical social  
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us to walk with the world and all of its uncertainties, and that allows  
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circumstances, and our sense of being overwhelmed.

So where I am right now. I am ready to go home. I am ready to go  
back. Because I believe that this body of people is standing in the  
tension and is learning to love the tension. That would be my prayer for  
all of us.... that we not only stand there, but we learn to love the tension.  
That is how we are to stay on this world.  
So.... the four from the mystery of night into the greater mystery of  
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