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Content
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REPORT ON RELIGIOUS HOUSES

Three years ago at this time, some of us were told to get our suitcases packed. I recall one of them had to be such a large suitcase that it even included a piano. I remember being all excited and ready to go. We formed a team with Fishel and Hess and Bailey. We were sure that that meant Atlanta was the place for us. Bailey came out of Chicago Metro so he couldn't be assigned to Chicago. Hess had spent so long in the Chicago Regional Office that he couldn't be assigned to Chicago. Fishel and Hess had both come from Massachusetts, so Boston was out. It just didn't seem like Los Angeles was possible so we were sure that it was Atlanta. Then the assignments came out. They moved Bailey out of the team (that removed one problem), added McClain and Shinn, and sent us all to Chicago, which was the last place any of us wanted to be. As we began the job of finding out what it meant to be a Religious House, we got a lot of mileage out of the record in which Cosby plays the role of Noah. God comes out and he says, "Noah." "Yes, God?" "Noah, I'm going to bring a storm." "All right, God." "It's going to be a big storm." "All right, God." "It's going to last for forty days and there'll be a flood." "No, God." "Noah, build an ark." "Okay, Lord--What's an ark?" We avoided answering the question "What is a Religious House?" for a whole year. The next year we did a take-off on the story. We'd start to tell the story, somebody would say, "We heard that one before," "That's good. We've been struggling this year to try to articulate the answer to it." And they got lost in the argument somehow, so we got away without answering it for another year. Now we've got to begin to try to answer that.

Someone in my college said this summer when somebody used the word Ecclesiola, "Do you realize three weeks ago I couldn't even spell it and now I am one." That's the way it feels to be in a religious house. But pause for a minute and look back--to think that three years ago at this time there were no Religious Houses. There was the dynamic; but there were no religious houses in existence anywhere. As we sat that summer trying to figure out whether or not to have one, we asked ourselves questions: Do you suppose in three years we might have twelve of them. This year we'll have thirty-six? I did a little kind of numerical game the last few days and found we're going to have more Religious Houses this year than we had people in the Order eight years ago. That was the first blow. Then I discovered that ten of the people who are likely to be assigned to be Religious House first priors this year were not even in the Order when we started Religious Houses.

Something phenomenal has happened in our midst--an occasion for which we stand thankful. Makes me think of the psalmist. Those last few psalms in the book are where he gets the psalms of praise out. It is appropriate that those are put at the end and not the beginning. You always know, however, the psalmist has a double twist. You have to see him in the middle of the road singing his psalms of praise and you see the mack truck that he doesn't see that's going to run over him in just a moment or else you have to see him crawling off to the side of the road, having just been run over, and starting his psalm. It seems appropriate to me that we sang "The Cryin'" a few minutes ago; for in many ways that's been the theme song for many of us out in Religious Houses. And yet the other side of that is the psalm of praise:

O praise the Lord.

Sing to the Lord a new song,
sing his praise in the assembly of the faithful;
let Israel rejoice in his maker

and the sons of Zion exult in their king.
 Let them praise his name in the dance,
 and sing him psalms with tambourine and harp.
 For the Lord accepts the service of his people;
 he crowns his humble folk with victory.
 Let his faithful servants exult in triumph;
 let them shout for joy as they kneel before him.
 Let the high praises of God be on their lips
 and a two-edged sword in their hand,
 to wreak vengeance on the nations
 and to chastise the heathen;
 to load their kings with chains
 and put their nobles in irons;
 to execute the judgment decreed against them--
 this is the glory of all his faithful servants.

O praise the Lord.

I want to talk primarily about the interior life of the Religious House tonight. To do that I've got to do a little work just to get my context clear. I want to remind you of our whole basic diagram of the regional dynamic and where the Religious House fits within that. We called the whole thing the regionalis (I never have liked that--gets worse when you get to localis). The top part was the action centrum. This is one of those cases where "my model told me so." We have never seen this thing, yet we know it has to be there. And then there is the training institute, and the Religious House. I was trying to get my mind around the function of each of these in the regional dynamic. This pole, as we've been saying all summer long, is the "that without which"--without a training institute, without a movemental thrust at the regional level, there isn't any reason to have a Religious House or any possibility of coordinated action. On the other hand, the Religious House is the organizing sign for the region. I got worried when I started to use that word organizing because my propensity for sin is to get into the polity dynamic. But it's the sign that organizes the region. It isn't the people in the house going out and doing work, it's the sign that pulls together focused thrust. The action centrum is the focusing of the expenditure. It's a way of getting your expenditure focused so it has some significance rather than somebody stumbling behind a car that's backing up and getting run over. Life is expended in a focused direction.

Now quickly to look at the parts of this. The first thing you have got to say about the training institute is that you mean by that category everything that you ever used to mean by region before we called that into broader context. You mean all the courses that are offered, all the recruitment that goes into that, all the setup of the courses, and all the pedagogy that has to go with that. You mean all the network that goes with being a region--the kind of common planning that is involved, the care that's involved, and the visitation that has to go on. Then you mean also the cadre formation calling them into being, their nurture, and (this is where the local church project fits in) the radicalization of cadre formation.

The action centrum has to do with the global interaction--to relate to the local and to the global, the local coordination so that all those little projects going on all over a region can have some power and thrust and applicability, and it has to do with "signal project"--I don't like that. It sounds too much like "local church project." I don't mean that; and yet in one sense I do mean that--that's what a galaxy is in one sense. It has to do with the concept of research into the whole process.

In the Religious House the dynamic goes something like this. Spirit infusion is all the work that the Religious House does. With the civil structures (that's permeation as well as consultations, etc.) all the work that the Religious House does is in terms of participating in the region and reaching out to the religious establishment. Spirit infusion is the basic task. Then it has it's own job in terms of resident training (a term I've coined). What I mean is the sojourners, the odysseys, local church labs where you bring people in for a few days, and the whole year's internship, which is itself a massive resident training program. A third category I've called style formulation, which is the Religious House in and of itself. It's the creation of the disciplined structures within the region that allow a style to emerge. It's the kind of structuring that brings forth missional families at a time when that's the most critical need in terms of grasping hold of what it means to be in mission today. It's the place of the religious exercises. That gives me a context within which to look at what the Religious House experiment is.

The other thing that I find helpful is just to think of the whole context of experimentation during this whole four-year period and that we're a part of at the current time. As I've struggled to give that form, I had to go back to the new social vehicle triangles and discovered that we made an attack on the top of those triangles in these last four years in a rather dramatic way. We were attacking into the cultural dimension. We attacked the area of common wisdom with our Academy. I find it very exciting to listen to the comments that were made the other day about where the academy needs to go--that the academy needs to be pushing in the direction of final meanings even more than it had been. My first temptation was to hear it was pushing for style; I don't think so--for final meaning. The Local Church Experiment is a direct attack on the common religion, bringing new form and style there. But the Religious House was our thrust during this four years into the whole area of recreating a common style.

With that much, I'm ready to go on and talk about the interior life of the Religious House. I want to use four broad arenas of concern. The image that I'm working on is "What would you need to tell "X" who is going out to be a Religious House prior for the first time? That's the context out of which I want to talk and know that when I say that I don't just mean somebody who might be the first prior of a house somewhere--I mean anybody going out to be the prior of a house anywhere; but then I mean that person who's especially assigned to be the first prior of a house. The things that I would want to tell him have to do with these kinds of areas: How do you create and maintain the structures of a Religious House? it seems like we ought to be able to do that like falling off the back end of the truck when we get there and everything works out; but it isn't quite that simple. Secondly, what's the effect on the interior life of the House of the missional engagement? or what does that do to the house as over against the kinds of experiences that you and I have had here at base? How is the life of a House different at that point? Thirdly, what are the uniquenesses of living in a house dynamic as over against ^{the} living at base dynamic? Then last, the dynamic of priorship itself. The four areas again are structures, missional engagements effects, uniqueness of the house, and priorship dynamic.

Now to talk about the common structures. The first thing to say is the Religious House has the same structures as base has. The question is what does it mean to get them into being and maintain them in being? I experience myself around here as having a great deal of relaxation about the structures being there. I get the sense that if I just utterly disappeared for two weeks and came back all the structures would still be rolling along, merrily as ever. I might be chastened a little bit and might be relegated to three or four jobs that I'd rather not do, but you know nothing would have fallen apart. When you go out to begin a Religious House, that's not assured as it is here. That's not to say that we need to be worried about the existence of Religious Houses anymore. They are

in history. But the size group you're working with means that the prior has the responsibility for creating and maintaining those structures in a way that even the most responsible around here can avoid from time to time. There isn't any avoiding any model that needs to get built in a Religious House when you understand yourself to be one of the priors there. You have such things as showing up at the dinner table on Tuesday night for Ecclesiola--you and the four youth that are left. You learn all over again what it means to create the Ecclesiola on the spot. The person who had the solitary office is in one city; the person who had the spirit conversation is in another city; and the person who was going to get the whole thing started is in a third city. Creation occurs imminently. There's constant creating.

What does it mean to have a presbytery in a Religious House that has only twelve or thirteen adults in it, to have a bureaucratic structure set aside to talk about the study, symbolic, and missional life of the house--to figure out who to make the bureaucrat--those kinds of issues that begin to get raised. Yet the presbytery serves as a very good way to spread out the responsibility and to get more people involved in the planning of the house. The problem is to make sure that you don't dilute everything. House Church and Daily Office are structures that are just there, but that always need to be paid attention to. You can slip into perversions so very quickly. You miss three days and you discover that the left has become the right and the right has become the left. But probably the most critical one that a prior needs to look to is the collegium session, for in one sense that is where he is on his own. It's not the most critical structure of the house. House Church is the most critical. If the whole house fell apart and you were able to have only the Common Meal on Sunday night, your house would come off. But the one that is the hardest to organize is the collegium. It has to do with getting a rhythm going and creating a vision that is out beyond where everybody is and with getting the common memory going. It's like you keep showing up at collegium and someone asks a question and you say, "My God! Don't they know that already?" No, they don't know that already. They've only just gotten here. And there isn't any reason why they should know it. And there aren't two hundred people sitting around embodying that memory. There are only two or three of you who embody that memory. Your job is to constantly be creating common memory, and to do that in the context of the commonness of the whole Order so that you are able to bring into that one collegium session the whole past of the Order. That way it becomes the property of every member of the Order wherever they are located.

The second part of the structures has to do with facilities, physical structures. I mean just how you use the facilities instead of your being used by the facilities. One of the great things about the way we have been forced to operate over the last three years in which we switch priors around left, right, and in the middle is that you really begin to sense that you get control of the building. You can fall into a pattern with the use of a building so easily that it begins to dictate to you what you can and can't do. One of the advantages of coming in new to a building is that you feel utterly free to make the living room into a collegium room and to make the dining room into two rooms and set one up as an office; set the other part of it up as a honey factory. Our living room functions right now as a honey factory. The bees found a way into our living room and honey comes down from the ceiling. Now lest you be worried, the honey will be all gone before the wedding on Saturday.

Then automobiles are another part of the physical facilities. Automobiles all belong to individuals, but at collegium every morning you fight so that you get assigned to your own car. When you have fourteen people to go out and you have fifteen cars, it's not so easily guaranteed that the best model is for you to take your car where you're going. When you have a car at the house like the Grows', then you're sure it's not the

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best thing to get assigned always to your own car. No, I was very proud of it; it pulled up here with a trailer and never even blinked an eyelid--right on time for the dinner on Friday.

Then, the question of space itself--how you determine how you allocate your space becomes a major issue. The primary part is room assignments. How you decide to make room assignments when the whole of the house's life is like a perpetual Summer '71. It's not just one month that you bunk up like that--it's all the time. I remember taking my bed with me to Oklahoma. My bed is a little bit longer than most people's and so it is my bed, which my wife also sleeps upon--it's not our bed. When we looked at all the rooming arrangements, my bed went into one room and I went into another room. The room that I had wasn't large enough for it. A prior has to be clear--he gets the small room. I remember when I learned that lesson. When we moved into the Religious House in Chicago and started this whole thing three years ago, we moved into a house such as you probably have never been in. I didn't care whether I had a bed or not--the rugs were more comfortable than my bed. They were that thick. We had everything laid out--the Palmers were in this gorgeous room; Mary Streeter was in that gorgeous room; the Stovers who are now in Australia were in that beautiful room up there; the Fishels, the first priors, took the room that had the walls all stripped off it for redecorating. And I lived in a closet. You must understand that this closet could hold over three hundred suits. But when I really learned a lesson was when the Dralles moved into the house. We had to figure out where to put one more family, and it was obvious that the place they needed to be was in the closet. Fishel was very subtle (I think it was right after he had been told that he had to get me ready to be the prior of a house and he thought "Have I got work to do"). I think he arranged for the Dralles to move in just so he could get his work done. But he let me solve the housing problem. I had all the reasons for not moving downstairs away from Randy, but somebody had to go into the room that was just big enough for the bed and the prior is the one who has to go into the room that nobody else thinks could be lived in. The coal room story in Evanston is the same kind of story. When the Order moved into that beautiful house in Evanston the Mathews lived in the coal bin. That is a symbol of prior.

The third area has to do with running the finances rather than being run by them. A prior has to decide that he is in charge of the finances and not a victim of them. It has taken me three years and I am still not sure I learned it. Every year it is such a painful issue because behind it is the assignments you have to make. Finances have to do with getting your budget set up with stipends, funds, missional allowance, maintenance, and global thrust; holding all of them together in your budget; and finding a way of keeping them in front of you so you know where you actually are. The most horrible experience is to be at the end of a quarter not knowing where you are. The temptation is to make the figures say what you want them to say--which works well and good until you get your dittoed sheets from base and they don't say what you wanted them to say. There is a rule of thumb that it is easier to start hard and come back than it is to start soft and have to get tough. I got so angry last year when Harry Wainwright came in here with a \$4,000 surplus and proceeded to lay out this model of how he had done it. I was angry and I was not going to do that. I was going to do it the way I had done it before. Then I got down to Oklahoma and looked at the model. We are coming out \$2,000 ahead this year thanks to Harry Wainwright. You have to get that hardheadedness at the beginning or your finances will run you.

Stipend negotiations are always a blow to the prior. To sit down with another family and decide how much money they need to live on isn't your question. How much money can they scrape by on is more like it. You get very sentimental here and think it is

unfair to ask a man who is making \$11,000 or \$12,000 a year to live on \$200 a month; you think that there is something just grossly inequitable about that. That is deep brainwashing that if a man is making that much he ought to get the rewards of it. But what we are really saying is we want you to give a bit of your life. No, that's not our stance. Our stance is that we want a man to come and give every bit of his life and if he can give every bit of it with just \$200 to live on, and pay interest on the mountainous bills he has collected, that is what you allow him because that is the way to allow him to really get his whole existence into the mission. To negotiate stipends so that a man has extra money is not helping his spirit journey. That leaves him in an illusion about how he gives his existence. Just as rule of thumb in our house we figure that every family has to bring into the house something like \$200 over his stipend or we can't make it. That is a bit of a shock to find that out. That is one of the differences between living at base where the Ecumenical Institute supplies housing and other services gratis as well as all its missional budget and living in a house where you pay for all your expenses including your mission out of your income. You have to see that when negotiating stipends. The issue is how much can we get by on in order to release as many people as possible into the mission?

A fourth part of that is being aware that a major part of your budget is the international revolutionary thrust of our body. When I am pressed financially I get angry at the items in our budget that have to do with world order support, and I turn to the image of the big bureaucratic structure that is gobbling up all my money; Base becomes your demon, and you have a way of escaping from seeing that the Religious House is one of the ways of implementing the polity that Fred Buss articulated a couple of years ago, that revolution lives off the fat cats. The problem is that you and I are the fat cats. The temptation is to put our own most private mission ahead of the global task. That broke in to me the hardest back in March when Bien Lorenzo came down to our region and spoke at our regional council. The Oklahoma City region is a great region except for one little item--finance. It has had a policy up until March of paying its own local bills first and then if there was any money left over, you sent that off to pay for the courses. The Development Office insisted that Bien come to the regional council, and he laid out what the issues were relative to Manila, what had to happen in the Philippines, and what was required. We were able in a minute with that kind of context to get our whole policy reversed. That was all well and good until I went home, sat down and started to figure out our house finances. Then I suddenly discovered I was doing the same thing. I was trying to keep one more person from having to work out so that we could have our mission in Oklahoma get done. To keep one more person working in is sapping money from your global thrust and the question that you begin raising is now where is the more critical necessity at this point.

Then the fourth part of this has to do with ordering your thrust. The structures of the house allow your thrust to get out into the mission field that you have before you. Primary in that area is creating your time design and your quarter rhythm. The way you structure your time is a key determiner of how you get your mission done. One of my colleagues just told me the other day he waited a whole year before he saw some of this. In Oklahoma City the summer before we arrived in that house, they had spent about four weeks gearing up to making a massive move on the region in Oklahoma, by which they meant sending one person out for a whole week. The first week that we were in that house we were in Tulsa and Amarillo which are five hundred miles apart. Suddenly we had a whole new context which had to do with a shift in time design. It had also to do with a shift in the whole missional thrust and what was ready to be done; but the way in which you structure your time allows that to happen or keeps it from happening. When things have been slow in a house because people have gotten overly nonchalant, when things begin to bog down, you make your time design choppy by putting three things in an evening instead

of one. All of a sudden people begin to get a feel that things are happening--bang, bang, bang, and they begin responding and operating missionally that way. If you can get that kind of a schedule going in terms of their interior being you get that kind of activity beginning to go on. By the end of the winter quarter, I looked around at our house and everybody had the frenetic jeebies. They had been out calling and two people just arrived at 5 minutes to five in the morning for collegium. And in about three freneticisms the whole thing was going to fall apart and so you go back and change your time design. You don't do this everytime you have a little problem, you do this once a quarter and you move so that you just have one thing going in each evening. They are still working hard but the pace seems relaxed because they don't have to shift their mindset so fast. Deciding what you do with your time line allows or disallows the mission.

Division assignments are the same thing. The hardest thing that I had to deal with as a prior in this area is deciding to deal with the construct before I dealt with the people. The prior's job is to get the model of operation in a construct of practicality and then anybody can put the names in. The hard part is to get the construct for that particular quarter, for the teams and units. The accountability structure of answering every night "Team One stands responsible for the care of its members" is the critical part of teams and units for me. Week II's are the other area of focusing thrust. We talked about this today and we did not seem to reach very much agreement. It seems to me as I look at our experiment as an order that whereas here at base weekend tends to be a time for sharpening interior life, with our PSU's and pedagogical training, the religious house weekend tends to be the time when most people are available for missional activity and you operate on a different rhythm, with more people out on a weekend.

Let me move on to the effect of missional engagement and bounce over against this kind of an image of the functions of a religious house. In the regional thrust a religious house is primarily a style projection. That is basically what you are doing. It wasn't until this spring when I began to get nonchalant about that. For a long time I was deeply upset about the necessity of using people who weren't very skilled in pedagogy, to lead a cadre in studying the Bultmann paper, or sending somebody out with a regional colleague calling on clergymen, when he isn't really sure whether he is going to stay in the house until tomorrow. He is out there recruiting people to go to a PLC to start the whole process himself. You get to thinking that the religious house is trying to get a certain set of skills out into the region, and making them available. Sure, a religious house is a pool of skills, but that isn't its missional thrust! Its missional thrust is projecting a style of missionality into that region. When you begin to see that, you don't care what the guy does when he gets there, just so long as he doesn't go to sleep. And even that becomes missional at times. Billy Parker is now famous in Amarillo as the man who comes and falls asleep during dinner. But Parker has turned that into a great gift, because that communicates that here is a man who is working so hard he doesn't get to sleep in bed so he has to sleep at the dinner table. (There are others who sleep all night long and at the dinner table.)

It is style that you bring into the region, rather than accomplishment. It is bringing a style that says "you too can be mission." I went to Amarillo to tell them we would go ahead with the plan that a galaxy would be located there. One of the families got scared it wasn't funny. They knew it was all right to have these people come floating across once a week and go back. But having disciplined corporateness living next door to you, putting a demand that you move into it, they weren't too sure of that. Being men of faith, after they admitted all their worries, hopes, and fears that we wouldn't come, they then said that "you need to be here."

But it is style, it is style in pedagogy. You have to struggle there. How much teaching to do in the region, and how much regional teachers you get in. The religious house prior is in a bind there all the time. If you want to get out of ambiguity, don't go to a religious house. You stand there, together with the other first teachers in the region, and decide who in your region will teach in that quarter. You decide that, knowing that the persons in the region have got to become the ones who teach that course inside out and backwards and carry the burden of it and, at the same time, knowing that if the house intern families don't become second teachers immediately, just the whole thing could fall apart. You stand there in the balance of that kind of decision, and as far as I know, there are no rules of thumb that apply. You see in your colleagues the developing of radical solitary strength standing there before an overwhelming demand that throws them back on their interior resources. Also, there is nothing like a two hour drive after a bad call on a clergyman, trying to decide how to report to the house to throw a man back on his own radical solitary resources. Depth spirit growth happens in the midst of that kind of thrust. So the planning as a prior is never just think about the task that the region is calling you to---you have to think also about the task they are calling your wife to and the second prior and his wife, and, if you are lucky enough, a third prior and his wife, and thinking about the four youth sitting at the dinner table alone, always including that kind of coverage of the house in your missional planning.

Then, in terms of resident training here, the first and most critical one for me has to do with intern stylizing. One of the most important thing a religious house does is stylize the interns who come for that purpose. They would never put it that way, yet deep down that is exactly why they came---they came to learn what it means to be corporate in a world ripe with individualism. Therefore one of your major jobs is in that area. It has to do with simply missional equipping, having them sit around a table while you build models, until they start building models while they drive a car. That is when you begin to get somebody who is equipped. And the kind of strategizing that is necessary. And the necessity of creating a common vision, which always requires a common memory. You can't create a vision of the future lest you are able to reinterpret their past within a common context that allows them to get a hold, again, of what it is that they are about. It is so easy to reduce your life down to making 14 clergy calls this week and not realize why it is that you are calling on clergymen, until some regional colleague says "I'll never recruit another course. It seems that all we do is recruit and recruit in order to recruit in order to recruit." When that happens a man has to have a vision of what he is about. Stylizing is the critical issue.

The only thing that house has to give to that region--the only thing that our order has to give to the world, is a radical corporateness. While we were working on the New Social Vehicle, I began to see some of the areas where we have made just fantastic contributions into the distortions of the social process. When we were working up in these areas we saw we couldn't think of anything new. We didn't realize that what we were thinking of was radically new to the rest of the world. Once we saw that, we began to see all the areas where we did not have the foggiest, where if we thought that we were going to bring off a revolution in history by ourselves, we were in deep trouble. It began to dawn on us that the movement's job, in the midst of the kind of cultural revolutions in our time, is to bring a radical corporateness to all those revolutionaries who on their own little lonesome are not going to change a thing but when united with 14 others can create a massive change. Our job is to create the corporateness that allows a global thrust.

Then the last part of that has to do with family style. What is happening in the religious house is the quickening of the family style of the intern families that come and participate with you. One of my colleagues came to me the other day to complain about some of the things that had happened. He felt that his family had been dumped on. He listed times where plans of their family had gotten changed, family night had been destroyed, a whole weekend had been taken away when plans had already gone on and deposits couldn't be gotten back. Finally, his point was that the order does not really honor

families. You can think of a thousand times when your family structures have been called radically to give up itself. As I look back on the families that were in our house this past year, I can count several marriages that would not be in existence today had they not had a radical missional purpose. It isn't the kind of strengthening of a marriage that any family would knowingly and willingly get into. Nobody wants to die to his way of manipulating his family, but when that death has been called forth, when a whole new family basis focused toward mission has been created, and when one looks back at that he has nothing but thanks to give. That is part of our task in a religious house. How is it you stylize the family life so that it becomes focused around mission instead of around all the other idols society teaches us to focus our marriages around. Once in a while you have the great blessing as I am looking forward to on Saturday of participating in the creating a missional family with all the rigmarole for the purpose of focusing that family from the beginning on mission. I am jealous of those of you who have been married within the context of our order. One of my colleagues said, he wouldn't get married in this order and face that kind of ordeal but that ordeal is exactly what makes getting married worthwhile, in our organization.

Sojourners and visitors are another way in which we do resident training. We bring people into the house for the sole purpose of experiencing our style. We say--Come in and study RS-I papers, or come in while you are on vacation and haven't got any place to live or --all right, you have rented your house, come live with us until you get another one. You are not interested in any of the things that you tell them about what you will do with them, though in your own way you do mean all those things. What you are after is exposing them to our style, exposing them to what it means to never be able to get away from corporateness. Someone once told me they would rather live at base any day than in a religious house because you can hide at base. Believe me, there is no place to hide in a religious house. Every corner is already being lived in. Our firmest colleagues as Academy grads and cadre members for 14 years still don't know what it means to live corporately until they have done it 24 hours a day even if it is only for three days. That's what sojourning has to do with. There are other things. You get to retool their stance; that sometimes works in reverse. When we had a sojourner at the time we were working with a construct where sojourners study for a while and do physical work for a while, he was the only one there, so he was raking the lawn. The only rake he had was one of these little short ones that are that wide and that high and with our high grass, this poor guy was pulling leaves down this lawn and he went 4 feet an hour. The problem was not his work--he was taking that time for reflection on the meaning of work itself. The problem was I was sitting on the third floor overlooking that lawn working on a lecture, and I kept wanting to get up and go away from my desk. There is an overhanging eave and the only way to get up from the desk is to turn toward the window; every time I did that, I looked out and there was Jerry raking. The stance sometimes backfires on you and you know what it means to expend your existence. That is part of sojourning, retooling your stance, getting distance from your own situation, coming apart for a few days just to look back at your own situation. But the priors got to be infinitely clear that in that kind of a context your house's life is utterly exposed to the region. There is nothing that goes on in a religious house that the region doesn't know about. That doesn't mean that you can be relaxed about airing your dirty laundry. That is still demonic in whatever context, but you know in the religious house your whole existence is exposed to the region. After you have lived through three or four major problems you get to the point that you can say "Thank God," for finally that is what you are there for, to have your style exposed to all those people so you can witness to them. Be clear that you are known. Just living in a city smaller than Chicago means you are known. Our house in Oklahoma City is besieged by journalists who want to write up what it means to live in a commune. Just think what would happen if we started getting newspaper articles all over this country talking about the Ecumenical

Institute as communes all over this country. Think what that would do to our work. It isn't so easy to avoid it. This summer we were painting our house--up on scaffolds and one of my female colleagues (she said it is because she had her hair up in curlers but I think she was just smart) found herself climbing up to the top of the scaffold to get away from a photographer. He came up the other side. A major issue is how you avoid that kind of publicity and be known where you want to be known, and not to be known where you don't want to be known. Sitting down at Malcolm X College with one of the pastors from the Oklahoma City Galaxy, we were reflecting on the fact that if that meeting of 800 or 1000 had been taking place in Tulsa, the new social vehicle would have been printed up in the daily newspaper. That doesn't give you the time to do what you need to do. This is a problem in the religious house.

Then the fourth kind of way of resident training is odysseys and labs. What you are after is intensifying style. You don't just bring somebody in to touch your style lightly; you bring them in to watch your style intensified so that they see through that style to the bottom of humanness itself. But you are out to just take everything you know and shove it into one block of time so that their life is yanked apart and put back together for them. Personally I think Odysseys are a thing of the past after this summer. We learned too much about the necessity to keep spirit and work intimately tied together. I am not sure my colleagues agree with me there. But whatever it is, maybe a local church lab in which you put the odyssey in the middle, as we experimented with last week, you are after getting that kind of intensification. One of the by-products is that you are forced to pull your own insights together. We produced a lab on what we know about models for local churches this past week. The only reason we got all that data together was that we had people coming in. That is kind of a by-product.

The third area has to do with the uniqueness of the house. One uniqueness in the house is that it is oriented to external task as over against work within the context. The major experience of the religious house is getting out of it. You are gone all the time. You are off on a galaxy assignment, your colleagues are off on metro calling, so you assign your house coverage. You also have that problem of the local church right there. There is a deep romanticism in all of us about the local church. If we can just keep our membership in the local congregation and go to it once in a while, maybe we can justify our existence in a religious house. We find out that is useless; we don't have time to be any concrete help to that congregation we are tied to. We feel guilty. An advantage of coming to base is that you have to take the physical journey that being in a religious house requires that you take unphysically, which is far harder. Our way of helping the local church is not by physically showing up on Sunday, though we have to do that for our own sakes and for the sake of the local churches. Our way of helping the local church is to forge a movement that is going to bring about a radical reformulation of the whole church. On the other hand, we in the religious house in Oklahoma City assign ourselves to local churches and attend every Sunday. That may be one of the areas where our weekend structures are different than here at base. We are involved in the local church, but if there is romanticism you have to take a radical interior journey, getting loose from that situation that you are in so that you can get a feeling where the local church is in our time and put into it genuine symbol of your concern.

Also, the religious house is just a smaller situation. That does radical things to you. Everything that happens, the tolerance is closer. You assign three people out to teach on the weekend and you have taken out 25% of your community. That means that the assignment of a single person is far more crucial than when you have a pool of 150. That doesn't mean that it is not critical in 150, I just mean the effect of it is much more immediate and the tolerance is much less. This happens in all kinds of ways. This

Saturday Terry Bergdahl and Pam Murphy are getting married in our house. The major gliche has to do with the drummer. There are three of us. I am going to be officiating, Parker is the first liturgist, and the third is Dave Newkirk. You didn't assign him back to us. We are lost--we don't have any drummer. It is that kind of funny way that you begin to discover the shortage of troops.

Objectivity is what suffers first when there are only three there, and you discover it is very hard to hold objectivity. In a room with three people you have to make a radical decision to call into question something, at least for some. For others it seems natural. So it is that kind of problem that you run into in the small kind of intimacy. The problem of sex is one of the things that always haunted me living that closely together--that sexuality will be a problem. I am very relaxed about that after living three years in a house. What I discovered is that you live so closely you don't want to get any more intimate. That takes away a lot of the problem. But that is one of the things that you have to be aware of. It has to do with our whole missional appearance more than any kind of moral code. It has to do with what it means to be missionally engaged in a region. Also, the multiplicity of roles that come upon you in a small group are many more. You give the witness every other week in a religious house. Around here I suppose you get into the worship team about once a quarter. Many more times. That is a gift and a problem. It is a gift in the necessity of preparation and a problem in that you just don't have the time for preparation.

And the difference in the number of people employed in religious houses. Most religious houses operate with 2/3 to 7/8 of their people employed. Some had only one person working in. This has to be reckoned with in your structures. The gift of it has to do with vocation. The laity in religious houses have a genuine way to participate in a vocational decision made prior to their decision to be radically corporate and find in a religious house a way to combine their decision to be vocation to society and radical corporateness as the church. That is the gift of the religious house to the movement at large. We were looking forward to getting a religious house in Tulsa where we have people there who feel the need to spend some time in a religious house but have jobs and churches they can't leave. The religious house offers that possibility but you have to pay the price in terms of structures. Divisions as assignments are a problem. You can't be thinking that everybody that works out is assigned to permeation. The term permeator does not apply in religious houses. If you put everybody in permeation, you stand there trying to be the cook, and the penetration division and the children's watch all at the same time. The division assignments don't follow that rationale, which means your divisions work with people who are there all the time and people who are there part of the time. Enablement becomes problematical--even simple things like getting the breakfast dishes done. And when you haven't factored that in, and dinner is late because you are still washing the breakfast dishes, you experience problems.

The prior is the one who leads the way. A major problem comes when a prior who is assigned out to work spends his whole time stoically bearing that assignment. The major job that a prior can bring to a religious house when assigned out to work is to receive that assignment with joy and to embody gratitude in himself while having that kind of a way of serving the mission. Stoicism here can defeat a whole house.

The second generation is a unique problem of a religious house--youth are there. They are there in numbers and very often they outnumber the adults, in the actual structure that is securing at any one moment. How you deal with that is a major problem. I'll talk about the children first, in a religious house. You have to get said from the very beginning that children come second. They do not run the religious house. That is not because you have other things to do or you don't like children; that is because that is what has to happen

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in society. We saw the whole problem of cyclical roles as we inverted that area. The children come second in the mission. That doesn't mean that they are not in the mission--that means that they do not have priority. The way you bring children into missional existence is not by spending all your time creating elaborate emerging generation structures, it is by embodying the missional style as a house and as your families create missional rituals and allow your children to participate in them. These rituals symbolize your families. When an intern goes off on a four day trip, have that four year old send him forth. That is the way you create missional families. Children come second. If there is any hint of a problem among the priors at this point, every new intern family will exploit it to the hilt. The priors have to be absolutely united at this point and never show division relative to the children. Once you have that said, the other side is that you have to have the most fantastic emerging generation structures that ever were in existence, in order to release everybody to go ahead and do the mission without worrying everybody about what is happening to the children. But that is on the other side of seeing where the priority is.

And the youth--for those of you who have worried about the youth this year, the youth are not a problem in a religious house, as long as you keep them missionally engaged. But let that missional engagement slide for a week and you have major problems. We had no problems with youth (that's relative) in our house until the last two weeks when school was out. There was not any earthly reason that they could tell themselves that they were still in that house, and we spent our whole two weeks finding them. We did not get a missional story for that last two weeks. We slipped up there. I have been instructed by the workshop this afternoon, to tell you parents that you should feel utterly free to talk to any prior about your children who are out in the houses before they get away. Some have suggested that the image has gotten out that the priors do not want to talk to any of the parents. That is not true. Believe me I want to talk to the parents of our youth as much as possible before I get out of here. There has to be communication. We have found that to have a youth prior is just critical. This is the one person who holds himself at the youth's perspective. That doesn't mean he has sold out to the youth, it means that somebody is constantly holding that perspective in the little things, like remembering that when the whole house goes out to certain places, the junior highs can't go. How do you keep that kind of awareness and create things that are genuine for them at the same time?

Now, last, on the Priorship dynamic. Let me say that priorship is first and foremost a corporate priorship. It has to do with corporateness of the whole house before it has to do with any individuals given that assignment. It is little things. It is remembering that the "yes" always comes before the "no." Those of us who have always just said "no" to anybody else's idea have to just radically change. When you see priors changing, you figure it has to do with this area that causes the change to happen. Say "yes" to whatever it is before you raise the question whether that really is what needs to happen. It is the nonchalant, it is the libertinism before the phariseeism that gets you through. When you start pulling things in too tight you destroy corporateness and create regimentation. Corporateness comes before the mission in a religious house. The primary job in the religious house is being a corporate body and that is the mission. You can't focus on corporateness, you have to focus on the mission. If it is a question of doing some particular missional deed and destroying the corporateness of your house, forget the missional deed at that point.

It is then that you see the commonality and here Scott's words the other day are adequate. Commonality is not some kind of sameness in our existence. It has to do with creating a corporate base out of which true innovation can happen on behalf of all. Counseling happens corporately, not individually. And that goes on in a religious house over against objective situations. A prior is all the time cataloging what is going on in every person's life and figuring out how he can deal with issues obliquely, where a man has a chance to step back and

make a decision about his own situation instead of getting some kind of psychological manipulation going. That doesn't mean you don't talk to people, but the primary counseling or the primary healing that goes on in the spirit dimension comes out of the objective structure of the house.

The priorship team itself is something that you have to pay close attention to. That second prior is the most valuable thing you've got. And a good second prior is one who makes his first prior come off. In fact, that is the only thing a second prior has to do. I discovered that a couple of years ago, when we had the three houses together at the South House, and we were trying to get into a pedagogy week-end. And I guess I just radically misread our whole house, and was pushing a direction for our house to go for the Pedagogy week-end that nobody else really thought we needed to go. Now, to be clear the three of us who were priors of those three houses had decided that was what we needed to do, but I just radically misread that situation. We had all kinds of flack. It looked like I was going to be defeated--just radically put down, in almost rebellion. That's no issue, you know, that "Hess doesn't get his way." The issue is that the priorship of the house was about to be tromped on. And in that moment, one Ike Powell stood up at the back of the room and just radically shoved the necessity of doing what had been laid out. Now I don't think that's what Ike thought needed to happen. In fact, I think Ike thought we were dead wrong. And I'm pretty clear I was wrong to have gotten out that far without having built a consensus first. But, what Ike saw was that to be a second prior, was to see that that prior up there at the front of the room came off. And, if I could find a man like that, I'd have him for my second prior for the rest of my life. Not because it makes me look good---because it serves the order. It serves the symbolism out of which we live our existence. Now, the other half of that is, the first prior has to see to it that that second prior comes off. He's got to give him the kind of responsibility that allows him to have a genuine role in the house, not just going around seeing that you come off all the time. He's got to have a task that he's getting done. And that's so for the house's sake and that's so for his own development, so that he can be the first prior in the next year. Then, your wife, or husband. You've got a special kind of role there. That's a hard one. The temptation is always to play the game of "see what I know about him." That can destroy a prior. How is it that you always see that your spouse comes off as the prior of the house. And then see to it that she also gets the kind of roles that enable her to get her being into the situation.

I don't know how you handle the question of priors meetings. I think we've got the same struggle there in many ways that we've got with the Panjayat, to keep them utterly open to the whole house to participate in. The whole question of polity of a religious house is up for grabs. The struggle of what the interior polity of a house means is overwhelming. And when you start thinking of the relations of the houses to base, you get into a problem that's just unending. You think of the kind of role you play here at Base, where you are the localis, 5th city, and you're the regionalis for all the religious houses around this nation, and then you're the globalis for all over the globe. It spins your head. Just within the house, it spins your head. Then there are all kinds of other priorship roles that other people in the house play. Just as you have here, you have your teams and unit, divisions, presbytery, etc., and so forth. The prior has to see that his primary job is to be the colleague of his fellow priors; that they have a genuine task and role of their own. We're going to have more problems here this next year with five regions having outposts. How is it that you give to that outpost utter integrity? Every unit of our order has got to stand on its own bottom. However that be, whether that be religious house to base, or whether it be an outpost to a religious house, every unit of our order has to be an integral unit. That means, that every prior in our order has to be an integral unit. That means that every prior in our order has to be utterly the prior. He can't be somebody's second man. A colleagueship is there of deep confidence even

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in the midst of unconfidence about that particular person or situation, how you get that kind of confidence expressed is one of the problems that priors face. You must not fall into sheer intimacy, and yet maintain accessibility for your whole house. There's got to be contact, and yet you can never be the buddy. Once you have decided to be prior, that buddy role is gone forever. You are the symbol, just there all the time. Whether you like it or not, you're the symbol.

One of the little tricks I play at our house (I don't like that language, but I don't know how else to talk about it) is when I get home from a trip, one of the first things I do is go out into the yard and pick up paper. At our place it's a perennial problem. There's a great dog in the neighborhood that likes to empty all the garbage barrels, so you're perennially picking up paper. But I do that not to get the paper up, though I am finicky and all that, but primarily what I'm after there is a symbol of care for that whole house. I have to find some way to get that externalized. People in the house notice that. I don't know that that's the symbol that you ought to choose, but you've got to find a way to symbolize your relationship to that whole house. How it is that you love that house in every point of its existence.

Lastly, your own brooding as a prior. One of the things that Joe Mathews said to me a long time ago has stood me the best here. He said a prior is never found naked. Not that his towel slipped on the way to the shower, but he never shows up without his model in any situation. He is never caught with any issue being brought forth that he hasn't a model for. It may be only a model to bracket the issue, but he's at least got that one. That means brooding has got to go on at every moment in a prior's existence. He's always got to operate out of long-range models. He may be recruiting next week's course, but his models have got to be out beyond that. He never dares set up a quarter's plan without having in his mind what his four-year strategy for that particular region. It's out of that that you set up what you're going to be doing in that particular quarter. In Oklahoma right now our regional four-year model looks like this as we go into the last year of it. In the first year we were preparing the ground and had something like an enabling order that got ready to have a Religious House. Then the next year was getting the Religious House established. Then, this past year has been a year of moving to the metros and getting broad-based laity involvement in the metro structure. Next year our job is to move to the sector level and get broad clergy involvement. Your four-year plan at every moment is a context for every issue relative to your decision. The greatest danger that a prior faces is working out of immediacies.

Secondly, is to remember at every moment that you as the prior are the symbol of the Order. You are the Order in that assignment. When people talk about what the Order is or isn't forever afterwards, it's you that they're talking about. Their decision about their relationship to the Order is a decision about their relationship to you. Now you've got to be careful you don't get overly proud at that point, but to be clear that that burden is always there.

Your job is to guard the comprehensive in every issue. The task is not to get excited about the newest idea that your second prior dreams up. It's to put the idea in the context of the overarching scheme, the whole Order's thrust, and your four-year plan. And the long-range questions--we were dealing with the question of divorce this afternoon in one of our groups and what our stance is toward receiving newly-divorced people. Your immediate temptation is to think about all the people who are either in the process of getting a divorce or just divorced that you could use in your Religious House. You're always short handed, but in the midst of that, you've got to get it radically said that

the issue is not who you can get into your house. The issue is what is the stance of an historic married order going to be before the world? That's the issue. Taking fifteen newly-divorced people into your houses around the nation would be exactly what kills our whole overarching thrust relative to being a family order. It's that kind of guarding the comprehensive that has to be brought to bear. Defending the deeps is seeing to it that everything you do is rooted in the way life is--not just because it's the thing that would handle an immediate problem. There are a lot of immediate problems you'd better just let get worse rather than answer them with a tactic that you're going to be sorry about later. I've learned that to my sorrow. I've discovered that you can get people involved in the Movement pretty quickly if you can just go out and figure out what it is that they want the Movement to do for them, and then promise it. But you pay for that. It isn't very long before that part of the Movement collapses under you. You've got to root the Movement in sheer cruciformity, not in enlightened self-interest. How do you keep defending the deeps is the question.

You have to have a rationale for everything you do. When we started the Religious House here in Chicago, we thought that we'd just go out there and put all the structures that we have here into being immediately. And that worked until Sunday night we gathered together at that house, and we said "We'll get up at five o'clock tomorrow morning for collegium." And somebody said, "Why should we get up tomorrow morning at five o'clock?" And you said, "Well, because that's the way our Order does it." And they said "So what?" You see you don't have the power of one hundred-fifty people in the room who are saying, "Of course we'll get up at five o'clock." Think of someone arriving here this week saying, "I don't think we ought to get up at six o'clock to have collegium this week." That wouldn't phase us around here. We would just go ahead and get up at six and he would have to struggle with that. At a Religious House when there are six of them and two of you and both of you have collegium at five o'clock and it doesn't work. You have to think yourself through. What is the rationale behind that? We don't just do it because we have always done it that way. The times I get the most angry are when I run into some problem and I call up here and say, "Now why is it we are doing it this way?" and somebody on the other end of the line that has been around for fifteen years says, "Well, we did it that way last year." Who cares? Maybe we were wrong last year, or our situation may have changed. A prior always has his rationale underneath. Let me assure you that it is far better to err in terms of doing it the way we have always done it than to think up some petty reason for changing it. Our traditions are rooted in the way it is, and you don't give those up lightly. What you do find is that you are forced to think things through for yourself in a way that you never had to do around here. Also, you have to have a plan for every person including your wife as to what is going to happen to her and to him in that house.

Then to realize the burden of doing all this brooding is to realize that you have so few other brains that have the history of the Order in back of them to dialogue with. You find yourself constantly creating without anybody there who has enough memory to hang back over against your ideas. The first thing that happens to a lazy prior is he thinks something through half way and he thinks, "If I throw it out there, there will be a Gene Marshall there or a David McClesky, or a Joe Thomas to slash over against the problems of it." But you get up and throw it and everybody is sitting around saying:

"The prior said it; it must be so." And you go off through the quarter doing some half-thought-through thing. So you find yourself driven back to think through things far more and finding ways for using your whole group to help you think things through. But you have to get the construct that allows them to get their insights out. That is a far different kind of dynamic than around here.

One of the things that we learned out of Summer '71 about priorship (and I will stop here) is we discovered that priorship doesn't have anything to do with having special knowledge. That got plain this summer when everybody got the workshop instructions at the same time. Priorship doesn't have anything to do with having special knowledge that no one else has. It doesn't have anything to do with having certain gimmicks or methods that others don't understand. Priorship has to do with having the guts to take into yourself the anxieties of the situation and to not operate out of those anxieties. That is what it means to be a prior in a Religious House.