

CORPORATENESS AS PRIORSHIP

To ask the question, "What is priorship?" is to enable us all to stew on the issues of corporateness, problem-solving and motivity. Our concern, in speaking of priorship, is not so much how we can shape up as an Order, but how we as an Order can impact the world with the Word.

As we have been discussing aspects of priorship, my mind began dwelling on our crumminess. Then I reflected on the kind of lives we live as individuals, who we are and where we came from, and how we became involved-- and I am impressed with us. Forbid, that this were sinful pride, but we are a wonder! After 15 years with this body, one would think it would be difficult to still see the wonder in us.

I am continually impressed by the number of people in the last week who have expressed some overt concern about the Order and where it is going. That, in itself, expresses the very corporateness that comes to me as wonder. The corporateness keeps us in being. Sometimes, I think, "Well, we tell ourselves we are engaged, but are we really?" And then I look again at the impact and vision of life we have as a group. What is possible is overwhelming.

All the same, sometimes it is my tendency to overemphasize our crumminess. But that is an interior decision I make about what it is I see. One only sees the mystery in life when he decides to. Sure, if you measure us by the standards of this world, we are pretty crummy. But wonder is there.

Priorship does not arise out of an individual's particular qualities. It arises out of decision---a decision about life, about what one is going to see and need to do in history. Our major point of struggle these days is with our own lucidity. It has affected us along with the rest of the people in our times. It tends to block us from being the corporate priorship we need to be.

I read the book The Exorcist recently and it really gave me a jolt. The Exorcist exposed how lucidity can be turned inward; that is what demonism is all about. Any lucidity involved in how I maintain myself in being or how I get myself into history is demonism. The Devil is the Devil and demons are demons because they are spirit. They deal with what humanness is, albeit unhelpfully. The writer of the Exorcist did leave me with an insight: Only expenditure kills a demon. Neither magic nor ritual will break a demon, but expenditure will. Our problems with priorship rest in this area these days. It is an area not broken through by some neat little way of handling

how we get to worship. Nor is it handled by some neat little way of keeping people on the job or at work. We are dealing with the power of the self-consciousness far beyond some little individual moralistic handling of individual situations. Therefore, we must push down beneath our lucidity.

We are beginning to see the vanity of accomplishment and the vanity of obedience. Why should I show up on time at a meeting? It doesn't make a lot of difference, it won't start on time anyway. Why spend all this effort when you know the work will go to another task force next week? It has become exactly clear that every little mundane aspect of life has to do with my interior decision about exploding my energy into the universe; it has to do with my decision to care.

We know it is true that history demands a corporate body of people to demonstrate both corporateness and a way to sophisticatedly deal with the urban world in a manner utterly grounded in humanness. It is a corporate body that history is requiring; therefore, our number one priority is corporate discipline---not my individual discipline--but corporate discipline. Improving one's individual discipline is demonism. The world needs a demonstration of corporate discipline and that story should enable us to get to worship on time, or whatever.

To be concerned with the corporate discipline is to ask questions like, "Do I have to hide so that no one can see my nonchalance is what is blocking the corporate mission?" or "What is blocking the corporate body from moving ahead and demonstrating that corporate discipline is needed?" It is in working with corporate discipline that we work with all aspects of corporateness, priorship and discipline.

By historical fate, we are a corporate body, which means we cannot depend upon any individual or individuals to maintain our corporate priorship and discipline. The total weight is on every last human being. How do we enable everyone to see that unless he picks up not only his corner of the rock but the whole rock, the corporate body cannot come off? How he bears the weight of the rock is now one of our deepest concerns. How do we enable methods that enable us to bear the weight of the total?

I speak not only of the weight of the Order, but of the weight of history, of the weight of the collapse of all human relations, the weight of recreating civilization. Without an inclusive context, there is finally no weight worth bearing. The Screen of Comprehensiveness is one of the best methods we have in this arena.

There are people who keep endless lists and I have always had great admiration for them. The question is, how do we keep lists but at the same time keep our passion involved. It is almost as if, once you build a comprehensiveness screen, or write an exhaustive list, throw it away; then deal with your specific arena of concern and applicability. Tunnel vision takes this form: "To hell with worship, to hell with everyone's Post, my Post has got to come off." Until we have embodied corporateness, problem-solving and motivity, no one can pick up the total weight of our Mission.

What is collapse? Collapse is simply loss of nerve. The only response to a person in collapse is the Word. All is received, all is approved, all is possible, all is good. When you have lost the vision, the only response is to wait until someone else comes up with it so that you can recapture it. By the force of sheer labor and sheer effort, you mold the picture again.

Corporateness begins to break down when we become accusers of our brothers. First you accuse your brother because of his crumminess and inadequacy and then, you begin to gripe about the crumminess of the situation until you begin to see that the problem lies within yourselves. Then you become the accuser of God and you start blaming the whole universe for where you are. That pushes you back up against the world, up against what it is you are going to stand for and you find yourself making a vocational decision about life. You realize that collapse is simply a luxury.

You may have noticed that people who want to be priors do not get assigned to be priors. That is the way history is. Priorship begins by being assigned by a corporate body. But it also rests in being chosen by God, if you will, to be a prior. That is not the end of it, though. Priorship is finally priorship when one decides to pick up the priorship with which he has been entrusted.

6/22/74

---David McCleskey