

PRIORS COUNCIL OPENING ADDRESS

We are celebrating our Silver Jubilee-25 years. We did not get to Beirut and we don't have 500 people gathered here to celebrate the Anniversary, but we did have 64,666 participants in Town Meetings, 1,600 in Global Social Demonstration Consults, 400 in ITI's 390 in GRA's, 500 in Town Meeting Assemblies, 600 in a Town Meeting Rally, 1,000 in HRM's and other courses, and 250 on Town Meeting circuits—70,000 people have celebrated the Silver Jubilee of new life on the earth. Beirut may not have been ready, but the world as a whole is ready for this dawn of new possibility for man.

I want to read something to you that is going to shock you.

“As far as we are concerned, we do not wish to stand in any one's way, nor do we wish to bring discredit on the ministry God has given us. Indeed we want to prove ourselves genuine ministers of God whatever we have to go through, patient endurance of troubles, even disasters, be flogged or imprisoned, being moved, having to work like slaves, having to go without food or sleep. All this we want to meet with sincerity, with insight and patience by sheer kindness and the Holy Spirit, with genuine love speaking the plain truth and living by the power of God. Our Sole defense, our only weapon, is a life on integrity, whether we meet honor or dishonor, praise or blame, called imposters, we must be true: being nobodies, we must be in the public eye. Never far from death, yet here we are alive. Always going through it, yet never going under. We know sorrow, yet our joy is inextinguishable. We have nothing to bless ourselves with and yet, we bless many others with true riches. We are penniless and yet, in reality, we have everything worth having.”

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

I have been thinking about the last 25 years. I haven't been in the Movement all that time, and yet I have. My mind goes to 1968: I remember standing in the courtyard of the West Side seeing four trucks being loaded with all the junk that the people thought was important to take with them to Los Angeles, to Boston, to Atlanta, and to Chicago. And here we are today, gathered from 104 centers across the face of this earth, to celebrate 25 years of the self-conscious life of one aspect of the Movement of God in the history of the 20th Century.

We have operated in four-year hunks of time since 1968 when those trucks left. Those first four years ended in 1972 with the Social Process Triangles and New Religious Mode. The recent four years began with tThe Other World and has ended with 500 Town Meetings and eight Global Social Demonstration in the World. That is where we are. It is a phenomenal history. We have come the journey to this point with great expectations of what God is going to require next, and we know, by the very effulgence of what we are experiencing tonight, that he is going to require an awful lot. We wait on tiptoe wondering what that will be.

I guess it is because I am in phase III that I get sentimental. I don't know if that has anything to do with it or not, but I have never seen the Order: Ecumenical look so good. It is a phenomenon. We are a people who have been tested these last four years, particularly this last year; tested by our turn to the world, by our risk to run into to world and declare the good news.

Remember 1973 when we got so excited about the Guild. We spent the whole summer talking about the form of the Guild, the logistics of the guild, the frame of the guild, and the something else of the guild, and we all went out to get advocacy. Everywhere we went we got advocacy and it was wonderful. Then we did not know what to do with it.

We knew there was something called the Primal Community Experiment. We knew it was right and we knew it was what turning to the world and being the church-in-the-world required, but we didn't know what to do. There was a kind of humiliation when the binoculars of the world turned on the miniscule Religious Houses and said, "Here they are. They have proclaimed their presence. Now, what in the world are they going to do?" We have been tested, and that testing was the only way to push us to demand of ourselves clarity on what it meant to turn to the world and to be the ones who care for the world.

We have discovered in the past four years how to care for ourselves in mission. We have discovered that we are involved in the task of a lifetime. In Asia a few years ago we said, "This is a very different situation than you face in North America. This is a very unique situation. You cannot understand how different it is here, because the language is different and things are different. To really be the church would be less difficult somewhere else than it is where we are located." What I mean by learning to care for ourselves, is that when I was in Sudtonggan, I did not hear one of our colleagues say such a stupid thing. I believe we have learned in the four years what it means to be the church and what it is to live by our own resources, before God, in this time. We have been tested in battle and we are alive. We have learned a lot.

We have learned what it means to be areal. We have learned what it means to live out of our own resources, to decide that there isn't some hidden hand either in some other part of the universe or in a place called Centrum in Chicago, Singapore or Bombay. We have discovered that the whole weight of the world is on our back and it has nothing to do with whether a communiqué comes or doesn't come, whether money comes or doesn't come. That does not change the election that God has placed upon us to care for our hunk of geography, no matter what happens. We have learned that what it means to care for the geography to which we have been assigned is to care for the entire globe.

We have discovered corporateness over the past four years. Once we wore corporateness on our sleeve and now it is an interior resolve, not as a virtue, but as that which is necessary to bring off the campaigns by which mankind will be renewed for the continuous journey that it is on. We have discovered that we are able and equipped to work with anyone. The word for that is yin yang. We have discovered in a new way that there are not highers and lowers, Easterners and Westerners, males and females. In the creative tension that all of those are, is birthed the creativity that allows us to think effectively for what is needed for the earth. This is a brand new happening. I think we've also discovered new corporateness in our marriages in the past four years. Now, I am not a romantic at that point, there is still tension in marriages today, but the collegueship of working together in a campaign with your spouse is one of the most tremendous, fulfilling tasks that life has offered us at this time. We have rediscovered corporateness.

In the past four years, we have discovered and internalized tactical prowess-not because we wanted to, but because being in the world required it of us. Four years ago, at the time when we were running around getting the authorization for those Primal Community Experiments, we felt like babies. I still feel like a baby in tactical prowess, but have discovered that it is necessary for adequate sociological care in the

world. We have discovered that dealing with the contradictions of life is absolutely crucial in order to be effective in releasing the creativity of humankind in forging tomorrow. The issue is not tactical prowess, the issue is being the ones who have the distance, the engagement and the sensitivity to discern what it is that will release tomorrow for the world. Perhaps it is only the beginning, but we are beginning to be like the wolves who sense the enemy. We are beginning to be those who can discern where to move and where not to move, when to wait and when to attack, when to hold our power and when to release it.

Finally, in being tested by the battle, we are those who have discovered all over again what some of us thought we had lost. We have discovered that we are engaged more profoundly than we ever knew in our infancy in being the church. We are being those who release the future. We are being those who plumb the profound depths of the spirit. We are being those who allow people to once again experience the awe and the mystery of life itself. We discovered that when we turned to the world, we did not turn away from the church but we embodied in our very being what it meant to be the church. We discovered all over again that we profoundly appreciated and engaged in being the authentic religious: those concerned with life-giving.

We discovered all over again what it meant to be religious was to give life, to release life where it was needed. We remembered all over again the words that John the Baptist's disciples brought to Jesus, "Are you the one, or should we wait for another?" And Jesus said, "You go tell John what you see, that Maliwada walks, that Sudtonggan hears, that Jeju do has words of truth given to it." We have discovered what it means to be the church.

This leads us to a point of time when we are at a crossroads and this is a wonder to me. I never thought our directions and readiness of the earth would come together in a common intersection, but I believe that is what has happened. There is a readiness of the earth for rebirth. You know that and I know that, and therefore, I am not saying anything new that you have not heard before. But that is phenomenally exciting and it is an incredible burden, for this is the moment in time that we dare not to lose and dare not throw away. The earth is ready. Shall I rehearse again the village movements across Korea, India, the Philippines and Africa, or the village movements in North America which we may call community movements or neighborhood movements? The awakening of local community to reforge its destiny, to care for its people and to see what its place is in the global economy of our time is happening. Those things have come about in the last four years, since last we began a four-year plan.

Or shall talk about the new sense of social responsibility that has been awakened in the economic community. The economic community, for the first time in a long time, understands itself as responsible for the rebirth of society and has dared to take upon itself that task. Should I remind us that over 500 banks in the United States have supported the Town Meeting? I doubt that that would have happened four years ago, but now it has happened.

Shall I rehearse again the readiness of the political? The political collapsed a long, long time ago, but it has been symbolized in Watergate and the collapse of political systems around the world: Italy, Portugal, Spain and others. We have been reminded that the old crystallized integrities that once were the basis of the social structure have collapsed and now that collapse has been symbolized. We should thank God for this happening, for it releases the possibility of the birthing of a new morality and a new integrity across the globe. All people have discovered that the globalis in isolation from the localis, or the broad

bureaucratic separated from the engagement of local man, is destructive and ineffective in releasing the new earth.

Finally, shall I rehearse the rise of local community and local man. There is a new awareness that the people who go to Washington, to Delhi, or to any capital of any nation have no answer. Local man yearns to be engaged in charting his own destiny. He is alive and seeking for new skill, new wisdom and new tools to be effective in the global world of which he is a part. Every human being on this earth knows he is a part of the globe and cannot escape it. There is a rise of local man and the yearning for effectivity.

We have become aware, with humiliation, of how isolated we have been from local community, both by our educations and, for those in the west, by our national upbringing. At the same time, through social demonstrations particularly, we have become aware that we are at one with all humanity. We are at the point of rebuilding the earth. We know that spirit is the key, otherwise we would fall victim to the liberal heresy of thinking that rebuilding this community or that community is our goal. Rather, it is the spirit of the creativity of all humankind so that it can create the future that needs to be released.

To do this we have, in the past year particularly, turned to the masses. I'm not particularly happy with that term anymore because it has an abstract feel. We have turned to the local, to community. Although it was back in 1972 that we said we turned to the world, it was probably not until this very year that you and I could dare say that we knew how to awaken and engage local community in the creation of its future. If you think that is a victory, it is, but it is also a heavy burden to know that you have the responsibility to see that that wisdom and the skill of the globe become the property of every community across the face of this globe.

We have discovered a tool for the awakening of local communities- Town Meeting. I remember that old bug model that we used to have. We had a section on it called witnessing love. If you want to know what witnessing love is, it is Town Meeting. It is the place where a community discovers all over again the honor and greatness of being the primal unit in society; where it discovers all over again that there is hope in spite of the fact that the agencies and bureaucracy has been demonically destroying the possibility of authentic participation in community and engagement in the creating of its future. That is witnessing love. The awakening and if you want to use the religious word, the evangelism, the good news, is the possibility for the future of this community. The awakening key.

We have turned to the local in Global Social Demonstration. We said we would do eight this year, and we have done eight. But I want to suggest to you that the turn to the masses and the turn to the local, or the year to celebrate the phenomenal victory of Global Social Demonstration, is not this year, but next year. The sign that we have turned to the local is our capacity to release replication, our capacity to allow a broad spectrum of local communities to pick up the sign created by these eight and to release the potential of their own community. That is what I would mean by justing love.

We talk in Global Social Demonstration of the shadow, of the one who follows the auxiliary in order that he can know all the auxiliary knows. I hope that we all understand that the shadow is not an option but an absolutely crucial dynamic for care for the earth in our time. That is not true simply of Global Social Demonstration, but having a shadow- shadow consultants, shadow orchestrator, shadow workshop leaders – is crucial for the replication of Town Meeting as it is for Global Social Demonstration.

We have turned to the masses and have discovered that we are also called to find a way of sustaining ourselves in the task. I said earlier that that was one of the things we had been tested with in the battle and that we had sustained ourselves. I want to suggest that as we turn to the masses more and more, sustaining ourselves in the task is one of the keys to our future. I think we did phenomenally in this past year in discovering that we can do social demonstration and Town Meeting without any hidden hands that come from some place else. That is crucial. We are revolutionaries who live off the land. We are revolutionaries who are never going to allow one program to not start for the sake of mankind because of some flaw in the global communications or the development system. We are the people who are going to decide that care for the earth requires figuring out the global finances and local finances. We will find a way to see that care for the earth continues.

As we turn to the masses, we are also going to discover in the year ahead how to be capable of flexibility in our major maneuvers. I suppose this year did not turn out exactly like you anticipated. I know in North America, we had an image of 1,000 Town Meetings, and we had 500. We had pictures of a different configuration of troops, but we are the people who have decided that troops is never a problem. We are the ones who find the way that God has given us to see that the victory required of us takes place. I suspect in the year ahead that we are going to discover brand new ways of effecting maneuvers, strategies and tactics in order that we can be the effective ones. We are going to have flexibility that allows us to keep focused on the task of victory for the sake of the renewal of community.

Finally, I want to say just a couple of things about what it means to be the Order in the midst of turning to the world and turning to the local. The other day one of our metro colleagues from Boston began to extol the Order in our Area meeting. He kept referring to the Boston prior and the Boston prior kept getting nervous. He said he wished that the colleague would stop referring to him by name. I reminded him that that is what happens when we decide to be the Order in history. We are the presence of hope to the community. We cannot be embarrassed because they use our names, even though we know that we are nobodies. That is the first hope these people have seen for years and years. Somewhere it is called the Jesus principle. That's a little heavy, but I think we are clear now that there is no Town Meeting without the presence of the Order and no Global Social Demonstration without the presence of the Order.

When we first started Town Meeting, we used the word catalytic. We thought that catalytic meant that if you snapped your fingers, dominoes would begin to fall and we could step back and do something else. We have discovered that being catalytic means to be present in the midst of an event, an event that would happen anyway but that our presence makes happen faster. Even though you do nothing, your very presence, in the Blue, is a symbol of hope to community. We are going to discover anew in this coming year that being the Order is that without which the new society will not come into being.

We are going to discover, as the Order, what it means to be generals. Remember that old poem which talked about firing into a crowd and somebody having to captain the ship? I think that is partly what generalship is about. We are going to become those who discover again that our task is not being good generals or having a super war, but winning, winning the way against the apathy of our time, against the decision of some to keep life as it is when God has decided it needs to move on. We are those who have decided to throw ourselves into the fray and win, and we will do so.

We are in a time when the world is ready, but mind you, we are not the only spirit on the face of the earth that is seeking the allegiance of man. This is a time when those who would encrust the world more than it

is now are also abroad in the land. We, as the Order – not this outfit but all Those Who Care – need to seek out that enemy and curtail it in order that the experiment in human history continue.

We are called, as the Order, to be those who do not get sucked into one Town Meeting or one Global Social Demonstration. We are those who are called to be a sign for the whole earth. It is easy to get sucked into one Global Social Demonstration or one Town Meeting and suckle our existence out of it. It is eight social demonstrations at this moment that are the social demonstration sign and no one of them is a sign by itself. It would be great if, just to symbolize to ourselves that we are called to show a sign of the engagement with mankind, we transferred everybody who is in one social demonstration into another, just to say to ourselves that we are out to be a sign of what all humanity can do.

I recall that situation in Jesus' life when he was healing the sick. He said to his disciples, "There's this huge line of people, but let's quit. We've got to move on to something else." You can imagine them saying, "Lord, there's this huge line of people waiting." He would say, "I didn't come out to do this," and go on. The sign we are out to raise with social demonstration is the sign that all men can do what is beheld there. You can imagine that if Jesus had stayed one more minute, they would have discovered what he could do and not what they could do. That we have set ourselves for two years is right. Then we must move on, in order that which is a sign does not turn into a perversion, but stays a sign that all men and all creation can participate in its own recreation.

It pleases me to say that we are going to learn to pray. We are going to learn to stand before the Mystery with cries for direction. We have never stood in a time when there were more opportunities open to us, and when we were more confused about which ones were the right ones to take, to lead to the release of humanity. Therefore, we will learn to pray without ceasing.

We have been called to be an Order. We have been elected to a strange and fantastic destiny. I suppose all of us feel the weight of it. I told some people a few weeks ago that I do not want to do one more Town Meeting orchestration, because every time I do one of those, I experience the weight of that entire community and its future on my back. But that is what election is all about. We are the elected community, and if you don't believe it, just look. Some will leave; some have left. I find myself weeping for some who were my fathers in the faith who have left, but I find within the vision of the three campaigns and winning the war, that I dare not take time to take it seriously. The time is right for our responsibility and care for the earth.

A few weeks ago I was very morose. It had been a bad day. I had had five bad calls. I went up to my room, and felt sorry for the way it had all turned out. I had two Vodka martinis and wrote a poem. The second to the last line of the poem was something that was really a prayer. It said, "Lord, where's another group that will do this?" Then it was almost like from outer space I wrote that last line, "but there isn't any other." That is our election.

I want to close by reading the line out of the scripture that we never used in RS-I. It is a fantastic line. "Now is the acceptable time and this very day, this very day is a day of salvation."