

Global Priors Council
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T-464

DAILY OFFICE WITNESS

I am standing before you this morning because of two colleagues, one Indian and the other Western. The Indian brother invited me to do an RS-I. The Western brother gave me a witness in the early days at Maliwada. That witness was relevant then, it is relevant now, and will be our saving grace for the next two years. Therefore, I am repeating it.

I was at the time I heard this witness, passing through a period of great anxiety and indecision because my wife refused to break up our 30 year old home and join me in the village.

The witness was based on our visit to the Ellora Caves, which is about 300 feet by 100 feet and 10 stories high. There was a workman chipping at the rock repairing some damage. For a few minutes we watched him at his work. Then, we moved on to see the rest of the caves. When we returned two hours later, he was at the same spot in a stream of sweat keeping up a rhythm with his hammer and chisel. He had hardly cut away a quarter inch up till now. It suddenly dawned on us that it had taken half a kingdom 600 years of chipping to do the caves over 12 generations of them. I was curious to learn what it was that sustained these people for hundreds of years just chipping. They knew they would not see the results of their creation. It could have taken one man his whole life to sculpture just one arm of one statue, and there are thousands of statues. Tons and tons of rock were hewn out of this mountain to make the temple.

I ask you again, what was it that sustained them? How did they live day in and day out just hearing hammers chipping around them for life, seeing the same faces for life, hearing the same voices for life, smelling the same air for life, swallowing the same dust for life. I could only guess that they knew they were corporately engaged in leaving a message to the world. They would leave behind a monument of courage, determination, brotherhood and love for ever. This I think sustained them.

Here the witness addressed me deeply. Because here was I, eating my heart out over my family, cursing the flies, insects, heat, dust, leaking roofs, food, etc. It was then that I killed myself and thanked God for a new life and the opportunity to engage myself in one good thing for the remainder of my life.

Now look at me, a social dropout, a social failure to be in a band of you people who take my gifts and forgive me my faults, who pick me up every time I trip and make me hold my head up high enough to see the silver lining. This is what sustains me. I know I will not live to see the results of my work. But like the stone chippers who chipped for life, I too am ready to join my colleagues in chipping away at this gigantic task.

So this is my message. My message to us today is, "It is to chipping we are called my dear brethren."

--Mali Balm