

It's become difficult to sing songs, difficult to give speeches, difficult to build models, difficult to create battleplans. Matter of fact it's even difficult to ~~ex~~ remember what you're supposed to do tomorrow. Home at last!

Well, it's the Long March and in the midst of that I want to read a passage that is familiar to all of us, but since this is the New English Bible rather than Phillips, it sounds unfamiliar. "In order that our service may not be brought into discredit, we avoid giving offense in anything. As God's servants we try to recommend ourselves in all circumstances by our steadfast endurance in distress, hardships and dire straits, flogged, imprisoned, mobbed, overworked, sleepless, starving. We recommend ourselves by the innocence of our behavior, our grasp of truth, our patience and our kindnesses. By gift of the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by declaring the truth by the power of God we wield the weapons of righteousness in right hand and left. Honor and dishonor, praise and blame are all alike our lot. We are the impostors who speak the truth, the unknown men whom all men know. Dying we still live on, disciplined by suffering we are not done to death, in our sorrows we always cause for joy, poor ourselves we bring wealth to many, penniless we

own the world." I want to talk about four things tonight. The winter desert, the experience of the winter desert;

the fact that the Long March is fire in the midst of which there are miracles; the radicalized revolution in which

we now participate; and the new Church that is in our very midst as a movement. I remember a year ago this past Sept.

arriving in Houston and having the first Regional Council that we were present for and making an impassioned speech that

day about where the movement was and what it meant to be the religious, and in the midst of that speech saying something

which I think we had heard earlier the year before, the fact that life in a religious house is the most human place in

which you can live out ~~a~~ your existence. The religious house is the most human place to live. And giving a very im-

passioned speech about that, and then in one sense or another experiencing that in the year to come. Well, this year

I've got another report to give and anything that I say about the last quarter is, of course, colored by the fact that

we've not been living in a religious house in the normal sense of that word, we haven't had a building to live in, we've

been ~~camping~~ camping out all over the place and putting up with a strange set of circumstances which I'll say a few words

about in a minute, But on the other side of that whole experience of what I would call the winter ~~desert~~ desert, coming

back to the statement a year ago that the religious house in the most human place to live, but it's like now that statement has depth beneath it that I don't think any of us could have imagined a few months back, and then of course there is the promise of the future, that there are still depths in that statement that none of us at this point have any inkling about. Well the fire happend and we got dispersed. That had happened prior to our December Priors' meeting, but the dispersion lasted a whole lot longer than we anticipated. Matter of fact it lasted up until three weeks ago. And during the period of time in which we had been living in apartments, people's guest rooms, things like that, we've actually, as a house, inhabited 27 different residences over that period of time, and one family I think has moved 8 times. In the midst of that we had a building on our property right out behind the main building which had been used for storage, we turned that into our office and collegium room and had most of our meals there, but there wasn't any kitchen there so we had to cook our meals in the kitchen of the Church of God next door and carry the food several hundred yards out to the building, but there wasn't a sink ~~xxx~~ either in our building or in the kitchen, so we had to carry the dishes back across two blocks across the street and up to one of the apartments we were using over across the street up above the

drugstore, I call it the drugstore penthouse, and wash the dishes there and then of ~~our~~ course carry them back to the kitchen and so forth and so on. And then of course the day after the ~~first~~ fire happened it started raining and when it decides to rain in Houston ~~in~~ keeps on raining for several months and so it rained for several months and there is no pavement around our building and so there was mud and rain and it was cold in Houston in the winter. And we've had a great winter. It's been kind of fun. And then in the midst of all that one morning we were sitting around breakfast in this little white shack, we had a ~~hard~~ hard time disciplining ourselves not answering the phone "The Houston Hut". I heard a ~~small~~ couple of people ^{slip} flip once in awhile, you know, and answer it that way. But here we were around the table one morning for breakfast and my wife went in to turn on the gas space heaters in the next room for the kids and something broke and there was no way of turning it off and the fire started flaming up in the heater and the gas was filling the room and right in the middle of breakfast in the nice cold, wet morning we had to evacuate that building and call the fire department, and we thought we were going to have our second fire in a short period of time. But one of people in the house in now a fire safety salesman and he has a lot of passion. He ^{had} provided us with fire extinguishers

and one of those extinguishers came into very valuable use. We put out the fire and saved our second building. It's been that kind of a winter. And in the midst of that I saw the movie Harry and Tonto. I guess it was in Oklahoma City we went out and saw that one night and came back and had a conversation about it. It's an interesting story about this old man who's comfortably ensconced in his retired apartment in New York City with his cat and no real anticipation of the future except more of the same. He gets evicted from his apartment and starts out on this long journey in which one by one he leaves his children behind because they have no place for him and then he leaves his ~~grand~~ grandchildren behind and sends them off to their own life, and then finally he has to leave his cat behind, ~~and~~ oh, he leaves his car behind, too, and then he leaves his cat behind and finally at the end of the film he is all alone on the West Coast. Well it was a movie about detachment, and I would report to you that one of the things that it means to be in a religious house is to take the journey of detachment. We were simply aided in that journey by the fire, and not simply by the fire but for all of these months ever since having day in to day out to live in the shadow of ^{that} the burned out building, and day in and day out looking at the ~~kk~~ blackened windows, having to make trips back inside to rescue stuff. It's been a strange

journey of detachment. And not simply for the people in the house but for the metro. And that I think was perhaps

the biggest surprise, that a religious house serves as a kind of center for the metro to which people become very

attached. It becomes almost a haven for them. It's a symbol of a commitment that they've made about their lives

while they go on and live in their normal dwellings, they come to the religious house. When there is no religious

house to come to or when there's only a shack out back to come to, it occasions a great journey for the metro, and

I would want to report to you that we saw that journey being made by people in the metro. Some of them didn't make

it through, some of them couldn't take the fact that there wasn't a house that they could associate with, rather than

having a place with bricks and mortar and lights and wood and so forth, you had nothing but a a sheer kind of ^{it} ~~sheer~~

of the mission and I suspect that no matter what kind of building that we're ever a part of in the future, the building

won't be the same, there'll be a kind of detachment relative to that property as a result of this winter's experience.

In the midst of that almost a psychosis which was only intensified in our case I would think from what anybody else

experiences in the movement, almost a psychosis ~~on the~~ ^{on the} one hand moving with sophistication towards the world and dealing

with the business structures and the town meeting people and the bicentennial people, on the other hand living in a kind of absurd dirt and chaos and squalor that simply screamed disestablishment while trying to cultivate the establishment, it was an experience of being the transestablishment. Well the Long March is that kind of march and these stories I've told are only stories out of one situation, but you have your own stories about the Long March. The Long March is getting tired. I came to Chicago not really aware of how tired I was until I looked at George Walters and then I got suddenly it all came on me, I got very tired too. And it's taken a couple of days just to rest up a little bit, but the Long March is tiredness, it's sheer expenditure and to experience these last three months has been to experience the unqualified demands for the total expenditure of our lives. I've heard people say, other priors say, when do we get time to think. It's ~~is~~ like we have to come to a priors' meeting just to get a few minutes to think and then we stay so busy that we don't really have time to think. One time I thought I was going to be able to get my day organized, you know, put a little time aside in the afternoon to get some thinking done. I don't know, maybe it's not going to be possible. I haven't given up yet but so far I've found out that all the thinking you do is when you're on your feet. That's it's

getting up and talking. You think while you talk and you get more creative thinking done while you talk than most any

other time. Or it's thinking in the car, just driving, a little time to think. The Long March is that kind of tiredness.

It's thinking on your feet. I'm tired and I want to go home. What was that song: had a little drink about an hour ago...

MMMM Well, I'm tired and I want to go home, and then the word comes well, you are home. Yours, at this moment, is the

Kingdom of Heaven. You are home. We had a trek, this is one of these non-Odysseys that everybody's experimenting

with, we had a trek scheduled for week 6 of the quarter and it was very obvious that whatever we did that weekend had

to fit into the Long March. You couldn't whomp up something special, it had to be a part of that long unending March.

And as we tried to figure out what to do, didn't have a house to have a trek in, you know a trek is ~~supposed~~ supposed to be

some kind of weekend sojourn or whatever. Didn't have a house to do that in. We were thinking of going to a Church and

setting up a ~~camp~~ dormitory and so forth, and then finally, well, why don't we just have a trek that's appropriate to

the Long March, we'll have a trek and eliminate sleep. So we had a trek and simply eliminated sleep. We started at

midnight on Friday night and went straight through for 24 hours until midnight on Saturday night without a break. And

it was an incredible kind of experience. We started out with a meal at midnight and then we had a lecture and then we had a two and one half hour seminar, you know, from 2 am to 4 am or something like that, and then several people got up and read a play at about 5 am, and we had a discussion about this, and then we had breakfast together, then everybody went out on a gridding forray into hopefully our new parish and then we came back and saw Viva Zapata, a movie, had a conversation on it, and then ^{we had} a long laboratory on election, about 3 hours, charting you life and all this kind of business, and then ended with a common meal, House Church for the week at midnight that night. And there was something about that ~~ngug~~ which was part of the Long March, the tiredness, the not stoppingness that was there. One funny story that came out of this which is a miracle, I ~~xx~~ mean it's a genuine miracle, it's a medically attested miracle. We had an RS-I grad back last fall by the name of Terita Gunker, she's a Chicano Mexican-American who is married to a man from Bombay, India who's name is Gunker, so she's a Mexican-American-Indian. She's a great spirit woman and she's been very active in the metro since last fall, so she brought her husband to the trek. He's never had a course but he came to the 24 hour trek, a great experience for him. But the story is that a few weeks before the trek she had been to the doctors' and they had

diagnosed the fact that she had a large tumor and they were planning on surgery, you know, a medically attested tumor.

The tumor went away, seriously, the tumor's gone, totally gone! I went out recruiting with her a couple of weeks ago.

We were coming back, ~~wasn't~~ she was supposed to get to the doctor's that afternoon, she is supposed to go back for a

check-up once in a while to make sure it doesn't come back, and so we got to talking about it and I said Terita, has

it really gone away? And she says, yes it's totally gone, do you know why it went? I said, no why did it go away.

She said, I went to that trek and, she said, that tumor in my body said I'm not going to inhabit a crazy body that does

things like this! Well, in the midst of the Long March the miracles are to see a new kind of spirit giant come into

~~being~~
being. For me these days a spirit giant is one who is self initiating, who sees what needs to be done and moves to do it.

If there's one battle that is being fought in the houses that I know about it's how it is that you break loose that kind

of creativity and self-initiating power in not only the tired but the interns and everyone else in the religious house.

I would say that in the midst of this Long March you can see that kind of thing happen, always with great pain and always

withk deep ambiguity but it ^{happens} passes. The Long March is tiredness in the midst of which are the miracles. And then the

radicalized revolution that we're apart of. Sherwood pointed this out to me first of all because he's been the one in our house who's been on the road for the town meetings, and he pointed out first of all that being out there on the road for the town meetings and talking literally to hundreds of new people and moving into situations where there are no colleagues, and the excitement that the reports bring back when you send people out on forays to make contacts and do research and to scout out the territory. You just get a sniff again that the radical edge of the revolution, only it's far more radical than it was a few years ago when we experiences being out there knocking on doors for RS-I and PLC and so forth for the first time, there is a new radicality back in the edge of the movement. It has to do with a shift from knowing to doing, or maybe just intensifying the shift from knowing to doing that we've been fooling around with for some time now. Our metro cadre has been experiencing that. A year ago we began organizing the metro cadre around task teams. Everybody is on a task team and the life of the metro cadre is in the task team. It's in the task, it's in the task, it's in the task. And that's in the metro where the most authentic history they have, or the thing they like to remember most is the Research and Training Guild that went on for years and years and years and

people understood the movement at the point of pedagogy, and now these days if you did pedagogy what would ~~xx~~ you do with it? It's the doing, it's the doing, and the metro cadre has struggled deeply for well over a year now with that shift from knowing to doing, but in the midst of that to find the corporateness of teams related to a task coming into being is the new kind of radical edge of the movement. Then a second thing in terms of the radicalized revolution is moving from a fairly private underground low profile stance into a far more public stance. We were talking last night in our work group, that even so we intend that we should be low profile but that low profile is on the other side of going public. It's low profile on the other side of meeting dozens of legislators and bicentennial convention people, and mayors and bankers and the name ICA becomes a public name, and that has radicalized our movement. It has put us on the edge in terms of being in the sight of others and therefore accountable in a new way for ~~xx~~ what it is that we say we are going to do. And then a third area in which the radicalized edge of revolution has become present has to do with strategy and tactics. These days you look around and no two things that you do ~~do~~ you do alike and no two houses are doing the same thing alike. You listen to the reports this noontime, from Washington, and you find yourself asking the

question How could we ever do that in our city? And yet you know that what Don was talking about is precisely what you have to do, and yet the weaving and ducking and turning, the million different kinds of tactics that you have to learn in order ~~to~~ to do something like that are part of a new flexibility at the point of tactics. The mission is one, we're inflexible at the point of the job that we have to do, but to learn to weave and duck and build our own strategic systems and tactical back-up systems in every situation is the radical edge of the movement. We found ~~it~~ that we had just run in, finally, to a stone wall relative to clergy. That no matter how much effort you put in, it just wasn't working, and yet the clergy have to be loved, dealt with, brought into the 20th century, released, made our colleagues, all the rest. So we spent a lot of time this quarter working on a LENS course for the clergy. We had it scheduled in February, but what we found out was that our recruitment plan was really a recruitment plan for May, not February. I mean that seriously. It's the right track, but the time span just had to be different. To find the flexibility not only is going, maybe, through LENS to get to the clergy which is still in the category of a wide-open experiment but in the midst of that, changing tactics and changing timelines. Or, how do you do a parish these days? It used to be

that we'd start the 26-week timeline. All you had to do was ^{put} stick it up from the Research Assembly and put it on your

wall and then go out and start pulling off your 26-week timeline. Well, we found out that we've got three different

^{parishes} versions that we're working with now, ~~and~~ and every one of those parishes has got to have a 26-week timeline all of its own.

~~They're~~ They're unique and you have to go out and build a separate 26-week timeline for any parish that you touch. So

flexibility at the point of tactics but iron inflexibility at the point of what the task is. Well, in the midst of all

that, in this radicalized revolution, interior discipline of knowing that anybody who touches the movement these days

makes a deep decision in order to stay around and there are people who are not going to make that deep decision and I

find that these days it's necessary to be able to honor those who say no, and leave. You say, blessings on you. The

revolution is for those who make a deep decision that has interior discipline behind it and you look for them. Or another

thing, the cry for nurture. We need to have more study, we need to have more spirit care. It's the same thing as the cry

for Bible Study in local Churches. You provide it and nobody comes because it's a final last desperate cry. Let me hold

onto knowing and don't make me expend my life out there in all of the doing that's being demanded by the Lord in history

right now. Well, finally in the midst of that just to witness to the new Church that's in our midst. We talked for years about what's the new Church going to look like? Where should we look for it? We talked about paper mache models of the new Church, and I guess these days it's become pretty evident that though we don't know what the new Church, as such, is going to look like, that whatever it is going to look like, the closest thing we can see today is ourselves. And that's a kind of shocking thing to say. It's the interior nature of the life of this body of people. It's the missional commitment. It's the quality of life, that is the new Church. And whatever the new Church looks like it's going to have those kind of qualities in the midst of it. I wish that other group of people hadn't stolen the phrase the Jesus People, because that's who we are. We are the Jesus people in the sense that Bonhoeffer talks about Jesus, the one for others, the ones who live their lives on behalf of others. Nobody ever said it was going to be easy, it's not. It's a painful experience. You look around and see colleagues dropping off. The stark demand that is there. And yet it is the new Church. I'd report that the houses in Area Houston I've visited this quarter, I mean you walk into them and they look great. There's a presence there which signals the new Church and then in the midst of that is just the sheer

raw humanness being expended on behalf of mankind. That for me is the new Church. And then, what is celebration these days? Several people have mentioned it already this week, the difficulty in celebration, and I agree, it's difficult to celebrate these days. Yet even with all the difficulty I think we celebrate far more and far better than any other group of people around, even with our difficulty, because the task of celebrating life is far more difficult for anybody else. We had a small metro council last weekend and ended up by going out to a barbeque restaurant and having a fine Texas barbeque, and several of the colleagues couldn't go, suburban colleagues, because they couldn't get babysitters for their kids or they were too broke to afford \$3 for the barbeque. Afterwards I was reflecting, we have more fun in this outfit just in terms of the way in which we can let ourselves celebrate than anybody else I know. That also is a part of the new Church. Or maybe the final way of saying it is that we are the social demonstration, finally, that the life of this body of people is the demonstration of the new society, of the new people of God, and that's the witness of this quarter.