

Ecumenical Institute, Chicago
Presidium

STATE OF THE MOVEMENT ADDRESS: CALLED TO WALK IN THE WAY

1. The way I experience the movement nowadays is a sheer, overwhelming complexity. But it's a strange kind of complexity, or at least that's the way it comes to me, because it's been occasioned by what I thought was going to be a new focus around which we were going to be able to operate. Some of us thought the Local Church Project was going to be a new kind of focus. Then the strange thing is that what you thought was going to be a focus turns again to spin you off and throw you out in a hundred different directions.
2. It's sort of like the movie "Andromeda Strain". I don't know how many of you saw it but there's really only one great scene in it. That's when the scientists discover this virus that they'd been hunting for for nights and nights. They gather around this little microscope, and they're sitting there awestruck because it's pulsating, and all of a sudden the thing subdivides into six different things. The response of the scientists is a kind of gasp and "My God!"
3. That's sort of the way I experience the movement nowadays, and the local church project. It surely is that kind of pulsating thing, and you look at it one minute and there it is focused, and then all of a sudden it is several different pieces. I guess that's actually what happens isn't it, in terms of the galaxy? Anyhow, it's the way in which the Project itself throws you back into recruiting, throws you back into pedagogy. I knew we weren't ever going to be finished with pedagogy, but I thought we were finished with it in terms of major emphasis, and here you are thrown back into that again. Or thrown back into metro structures. And you can go down the line into one thing after another.
4. I suppose when it finally hits you is when all that complexity and overwhelmingness hits you personally smack in the face. That happened to me this fall when my religious house prior came over. You've always got to be careful to watch when they're wearing their "regional hat" and when they're wearing their "auxiliary hat" because the regional hat always comes to me as a dangerous kind of thing. But I wasn't watching very carefully that particular morning. What happened was that first they said something like, "Well, with the kind of demands you're facing, it looks to me like you ought to give up the metro coordinator position." I remember my response was something like, "Funny you should say that before I had a chance." But that really threw me off guard. I thought, "Finally he has seen that the local church project is the place where I can slip into my niche and do my job, and relieve myself of some of those other roles that it seems I've been playing for years."
5. Then I began to engage in a conversation about how important pedagogy was in the region and what a tool for formulation it had been in times back, and how it might well be that the time had come again for a new sort of emphasis on pedagogy. Well, I may be naive, but I'm not that naive. When that part of the conversation began to come up, I began to have my suspicions, and sure enough, before the morning ended I was faculty coordinator for the New York region. I'm not quite sure how that happened, but again I'm clear that this project simply throws you back into the overwhelming complexity of the demand that's there.

10. How is it that we're about just one thing in history? Or how is it that the local church project is about just one thing? And so I want to talk about that a little this morning and reflect on it. In one sense this isn't going to be anything new, I'm sure. But that as I look at the complexity and ask myself, "What is the one thing we are about?" it comes back over and over again that what we are about is being, or that what we are about is being a certain kind of style in history, being a certain kind of presence in the world, having--but having isn't really right--it's being a way, being a way in history. And for me the reason that the song "Called to Walk in the Way" is so powerful is because that's what it's all about. In the midst of all that complexity, it's about walking a particular kind of way, and then embodying or being that way in history for the sake of all men. It's being the way of possibility, it's being the way of the open future, it's being the way of the new life, it's being the way of the crucifixion at the same time that it's resurrection. It's being the way of the ascending path rather than the descending path.

11. I guess one of the people in my meditative council reminds me of that over and over again is a guy by the name of Bojangles. He came into my consciousness in a popular song, (you know how fickle our culture is--he's gone now in terms of popular song, but he's still part of my meditative council). He traveled, all over the place. He was really a global man in terms of his traveling. The way they put it in the song was that he traveled all through the South. And wherever he went he ran into people for whom life had become just one thing after another, whose eyes had become focused on the treadmill and their feet, and the humdrum routine of what life had become for them. What Bojangles did, everytime he arrived on that kind of scene was a dance. Not only did he do a dance, but he clicked his heels. So they say that the story began to spread about him, and wherever he went people would gather around him and beg him to dance. There was a new vision, a new sense that there was a future for people, and that happened, so they say, in his travels through all the South.

12. The way the question gets raised for me is as I look at the style of life that is the predominant style of my laymen, and the kind of shift that sometimes takes place. There's one particular man I have in mind. He's a great man, a man of passion and care and concern. For 45 years his life has been focused in and grounded in himself, not because that's where he wanted the passion to be directed, but because he didn't know any other way to direct or focus it. We sat down one night to talk about his experience, and the future of the church, and there was a strange kind of twinkle in his eye that I hadn't seen there before. He began to talk rather excitedly and he ended by saying, "Never before in my whole lifetime have I seen that I could do something important, even world-shaking." Now my first response to that still is unbelievable dismay. How is it that a man could be in the church of Jesus Christ for 45 years and never have heard the freeing Word that he had permission to be the greatness that he was? How does that happen? And yet, the other side of that is that at this point of his life he has caught a glimpse of his greatness, a glimpse that his life could really count for something and can count for something, a glimpse that he can be the greatness and significance he in fact is.

13. That's what it is to be the way that we are, it seems to me. That's the one thing we are about. Everything we do is to give people permission to create tomorrow the new face of the planet Earth. It seems to me that if we're inviting people to anything less than genuinely participating in the whole globe, the future of the globe, then we're the most ridiculous of all people. And that, in the midst of the complexity, is what we're all about.

STATE OF THE MEDITATION: Called to Wake

Where is the Wine?

Journey of
Spirit Advancement

the way to the
FUTURE

the Past

Complex Spirit	isolated environment	inconsistent to lead	semi philosophy	Sign Society	long time in history	Co- operation	flexible to change	inconsistent to lead	isolated to lead	spirit sustaining
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Spirit advancement is about one thing - ^{and by then} ~~efficiency~~ to ensure a better future.

What journey
Inconsistent environment
Isolation to lead
Semi philosophy
Inconsistent to lead
Spirit Advancement

10/10