

The Resurgence of the
Church Dynamic in the World

Our discussions on the relation of the Church to the World have taken us way down the line in our awareness of how we have been trapped in dualistic images of the Church and the World.

To continue that dialogue, let's look again at the Social Process Triangles and the People of God Triangles. Recently, at an ITI, where they were mounted as major decor on the wall of the Great Hall, they seemed to stand over us like two great big mountains. It was as if they were a Sinai in our attempt to get hold of "commandments" in our day. To begin with basic humanness, we point to the dynamics going on in the Social Process; the People of God, or Church triangles, go on to show how those dynamics have been embodied in various social forms. Today those forms are undergoing radical mutation, and ours is the task, amidst overwhelming fright and doubt, to weld the new forms into being.

Every society has the shaman activity in that dynamic which reveals those cracks in society which make transparent the Mystery. Every community has its cultic dimension--that dynamic which provides the myth, rites, and symbols which allow the community to grasp its humanness in all relations. Every community has an overlay of love upon it--the dynamic of care--which transmutes social interaction into a civilizing process.

I. THE GUILD

Summer '71 was a watershed in our practical theologizing. We created a model which held the universe of the Social Process. That model was an attempt to grasp comprehensively the social process and to be internally consistent in showing the relationships within that process. It was created to be applicable to every social activity of any size community, at any point in time. It might be pointed out that this social process includes the religious process as part of its everyday life. The model does not explicitly reveal its ground. However, lucidity sees that finally it is grounded in Nothingness--that abyss out of which everything comes and into which everything goes. Lucidity knows, however haltingly, the Mystery and the awe-filled existence that rests on the Mystery.

As just pointed out, the world creates its religion to hold its various relationships and its relation to the Final One--the Mystery--however conscious or unselfconscious this may be at any particular point. It grasps itself through its symbols--its language, art, and myths. It assigns values to its various relationships, its social institutions, its communities, and to the symbols themselves. Through its stories the world grasps its relation to past communities and the dimension of archaic wisdom. Finally, it sees all these relationships in perspective to their ultimate relationship.

However, the world confuses its loyalties. It is loyal to one or more among the many and not the One beyond the many. It closes its content and becomes responsible to itself alone. Cultural Christianity in Germany between World War I

and II has been used as an example. But we could, as well, point today to popular Christianity, popular Hinduism, and popular Islam, or to nationalism, socialism and economic imperialism.

The Social Process model is an attempt to grasp the world which, in the eyes of the Church, God creates, God loves, God sustains, and God recreates. However one sees it, it is the only world anyone has--Church or otherwise. It is the only world in which anyone can exist, work, or respond to God. It is the world into which one is born, matures, sickens and dies. It is the world in which one cares for his neighbor, for society, for mankind, and for creation. It is the only world we have to live in. Being is in the world; therefore, to respond to Being is to respond to its creation. Or to put it theologically, God, the Creator, is only known in the midst of His creation.

This is why today the Guild is the primary dynamic in the Local Church itself. Every man around the world needs tools by which he can respond to the imbalances in the social process and by which he can concretely care for his neighbor and act out that care for all creation in his daily life. This is why the Guild has become paramount and why we are pouring our being into it.

In the time of Resurgence, care becomes predominant. Care reveals itself as an objective reality exploding in the midst of the world as well as in our own being. The Guild, first of all, is the place where care may be harnessed and fulfilled. The Guild is, secondly, a place of transparency to that final reality on which all creation rests. That transparency takes place in the midst of "hammering away" at the major contradictions and "banging out" the tactics. When we shove them into the future, it is as if we were to take a heavy razor blade and scrape off our skin; underneath appears the raw flesh and blood and sinews of life. In the midst of the major contradiction and the tactics, the awe appears. This is what broke through for us in Summer '71.

We know when we shove to the depths of the Social Process and struggle with the contradictions and tactics and wrestle with what it means to be practically responsible for life, the awe pushes back out of that confrontation. We also experience, in the Guild, transparency in our spirit exercises, songs, rites and Cabarets. This was the gift especially of Summer '73.

At the same time, the Guild is a part of the world which knows the secret the world itself is actualizing; that is, the creative process itself is gracious. The People of God, through the Guild dynamic, carry this secret and bear witness to it. The key to the secret is total expenditure, or Universal Benevolence. The ground of the meaning of "consciousness of consciousness" is universal; that is, unreduced, non-provincial, unselfish, benevolent, or Universal Benevolence. That is why the LENS course has built into it the polarity of spirit and methods. Even doing the methods of corporateness, problem solving, and motivity articulates the spirit. You might say, the Guild is the tactical and spirit mace against the world's contradictions.

II. THE CONGREGATION

To begin as we have, puts the world first. The Guild is primary in the Church dynamic. Next is the Congregation, which we have said, is over-extended, or is the tyrant in the dynamic of the Congregation, Cadre and Guild. However, in the Church dynamic, the Congregation is the one that knows the transparent and creates the cultus, which holds people present to the Mystery. But not only that, the cultus

dates to name the Name. In other words, it creates the symbol of the symbols, and they themselves become a sign. They don't initiate the religious dimension, or even the myth, rites and symbols by which the world lives and they live; but they receive these from the world and the communities in the world.

Therefore, the Congregation has two tasks: to recast the religion of the world from the provincial to the universal, from closed societies to open societies; and to bring the symbols of its own community to be those signs that constantly enable the process of universalizing. In other words, if the Church's symbols are not transposed into the world of our time, then they do not judge or recreate or enable the symbols by which the world lives.

As an eschatological community, the Church illumines and transforms our existence; or to put it into traditional language, the Church, when it carries out its task, reconciles man to God. The Church in the modern world lived out of the social form of two worlds. That is exactly what it should have done, because it was in the world. Now we live in a post-modern world. The social form of two worlds now needs to be replaced with a social form of the principle of transparency. Not only is this needed in the Parish where religious symbols are secular and indirect, but even more so, in the Congregation, where religious symbols are suspect and expected to be irrelevant.

III. THE CADRE

The Cadre is tertiary in the Church dynamic. I used to think the Guild was the collapsed dynamic, but today I wonder if maybe it is not the Cadre dynamic. They are the ones who know the transparency of the transparency. They are the "religious:" those who self-consciously know transparency and self-consciously choose to symbolize intensely that transparency. They are both the worldly and the different.

The Cadre dynamic's task is to catalyze the Guild, Congregation, and Cadre dynamics. They plumb the deeps of the Other World in the midst of This World, rather than the "two-story" world. This is a crucial key for the Guild in its secular form and the Congregation in its religious form. This involves embodiment in our everyday mundane lives. The Other World has to become as mundane in our lives as eating and drinking and sleeping.

The Cadre demands sainthood; the Cadre demands we be the religious. We must become saints or the religious, otherwise the Guild, the Congregation, and our Houses, (by that I mean the Cadre) will not come off. Now mind you, when I say we must become saints or the religious, this does not mean we make some big decision about how, now, we are going to be saints. Rather, it is to press to the bottom; it is to embrace the core of our being. It is to plumb the well-spring of our own lives. If you and I are to put on the skin of the religious or sainthood, we press to the foundational indicative of our lives. In other words, we intensify, or move into the midst of, the white-hot heat of consciousness. Universal Benevolence is total expenditure of every fibre of our being, and naming, as blessed, every situation as it is.

Each dynamic has its temptation. The Guild has the temptation to love something less than the whole world. The Congregation has the temptation to remove itself from the world. The Cadre dynamic, or the religious, has the temptation to refuse to live in the Other World in the midst of This World. In which dynamic do we live

or work or participate? All three, I presume; for all three are dynamics in one process--the living of our lives. We live in the midst of that dynamic we have been given the lucidity to be aware of and the commitment to work in. However, though we stand in all three dynamics, probably we grasp ourselves more from the Cadre pole than any other.

I think today our greatest sin, as I look into myself and at some of you, may be that of "sloth." I have always thought of the seven deadly sins in the world's moralism, with sloth meaning "laziness." But it dawned on me that the sloth our Fathers were pointing to was in the spirit dimension of life. It is spiritual sloth, a spiritual laziness, or even fearful laziness. It is holding back, or dragging your feet, or hesitation, or even frantic busyness in order to hold back the spiritual dimension--to try to keep from taking the next step into the spirit deeps. It is refusal to live in the Other World in the midst of This World. It is to personally acknowledge that we are that dynamic and are to see that our neighbor self-consciously knows that dynamic goes on in the midst of the world.

IV. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Now, to take a look at a few of the practical dimensions of what we have been talking about. In the area of the Guild establishment, you have hammered out a battleplan and put it on a twenty-six week timeline. That work genuinely prepares you for the next six months. Regardless of how many anxieties you may have, you go back with no concrete fears. Though somewhat hazily, we see the Guild is probably the key to Parish tactics. This, we put in the back of our minds to remember to subconsciously gather data on as we go about doing the Guild. Also, we do not have to be overly concerned about systematic theoretical clarity about every dimension of the Local Church dynamic.

Also, I think we need to nourish the Local Church Auxiliaries. Now mind you, most of our energy, psychologically, is going to be spent on the Guild, but we need to make sure the Local Church Auxiliaries are cared for. If what I said is even closely correct, then the Congregational dynamic is going to explode into radical new social forms, as we begin to push the Guild to the bottom. Therefore, the Auxiliaries must wait on the Lord with a joyous expectation, and with utter intensity be present to the Local Congregation galactic experience in which they are involved. This is not a time for spiritual laziness or rest. This is a time of utter presence in their midst. They need to be nourished in order to grasp and understand their task and waiting.

At Centrum, a Guild post is being created to act as the continental backup system to receive the demand you will make on us to be of service to you. Going ahead is a shift in the grasping of mission. The area-consciousness which came out in common battleplanning this week was over-helming, and an indicator of what the areas have in store for them as they become a self-conscious dynamic of mission in their chosen station. You must look for ways to expand your leadership much more rapidly, to grow people up quickly in order to expand your base. All the people in your houses are going to have to be putting on the Guild project in these six months, as well as carry out the Galaxy Auxiliary dynamic, etc.. This is a time to recreate the possibility for them.

The pressure of preparing people for global assignment is coming, but we hope to hold off that pressure in the immediate quarter. We have lived up to our pledge

to the Global Order that we would bracket North America and expand throughout the world, but we cannot slow down. You need to see that interns get to Centrum to round out their preparation and training. Great strides were made last quarter in the Metro Cadres. The same thing will be intensified this quarter as we move into the Guild. In the area of the spirit where we have already talked about training leadership, you need to press continually the indicative. Keep thinking through the spirit methods and the meaning of imparting those methods to the newest intern. Embody them and embed them in the bowels of all your house members so they become second nature to them.

When you go back to your house you are going to find the Dark Night is still there. It is not going to go away tomorrow or the next day or next year or in your generation. But you can be "at ease." You can be "at rest" in the midst of the horrifying intensification of humiliation, weakness, hostility, and suffering, now that rest is not psychological, but blessed. Concretely, we will probably have some radical shatterings ahead of us and will increasingly experience a strong sense of judgment, with a breakloose in mission. We have to watch carefully. You may recall how, a year ago, in the year of the Great Turn, someone described our turning like that of a flying 747. I remember running into a squall in a plane one time and trying to turn that plane around. The thermal activity in the thundercloud suddenly flipped us over on our back and we were headed down with terrifying speed towards the ground. It is almost this kind of shaking that you and I might anticipate. I do not know when it will come or how it will come. You can almost bet, however, that it will be there.

You and I are going to be filled with self-doubt. It will be the kind of doubt that says, "Can I do it?" But it is not just, "Can I do it," where you anticipate that you can always let the other guy do it. It will be the self-doubt that asks, "Can we do it?" You will have forgotten that God loves you and you will say, "Can I? Can we do it?" It is then you need to know and remember that Satan is standing before you. When you go back stick your finger in his face like this and say, "You I can do it!!"

-Joseph A. Slicker

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