

Plenary Session
Order Base
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Palm Sunday

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TRANSPARENT DOING

It is a frightening thing to speak before this group. I suppose it's because you know you'll be around for a while after you talk, so it takes a good deal of screwing up of courage to do that.

I also find that it takes a good deal of courage to talk about the Journeys--just to decide that you know what you're talking about when you move to talk about the Journeys. I'd much rather talk about the Corporates rather than the Journeys, which are an intensification of the Corporates. Or I'd much rather talk about the Solitaries, which when they are intensified, you talk about the Journeys.

One of the ways I screw up my courage to talk about things like this before a group like this is to remind myself that I have a seminary education. I learned three things in seminary. The first thing I learned is that it is possible to affirm the totality of life. I got that primarily through extra-curricular activities. The second thing I learned at seminary was that none of the wise old men really know what life is finally about. --That's not the right way to say it. What I learned was that none of those wise old men could finally tell you what life was finally about. One of your colleagues has suggested that to demonstrate and hold that kind of finiteness before people when they get overawed by seminary professors we ought to have them once a year walk naked across the stage so everybody could see how finite they are. I used to think that was a pretty good idea until somebody started talking about the Academy as the new seminary. Nobody ever finally tells you what life is about. You have to decide. That was the third thing I learned in seminary. You finally have to decide. So I'm going to talk and then you have got to decide.

Seminary was a symbol for me also, because that's where I first came in some sense to terms with the betrayal which the church had perpetuated upon me, where at some point I was able to say that the church had betrayed me. That betrayal came primarily to consciousness in and through the unauthenticity of the Doing of the church. You and I know that it came through the knowing and the being primarily, but it came to light or to surface in doing, and we were able first to talk about the betrayal of the church in terms of its failure in action. I suppose we're here now because of Jack Lewis in the olden days who succeeded so very very well through the work in Austin, Texas, and then came up against the inauthenticity of that success. The failure of the Doing to in some way trans-late or in some way become transparent Being or transparent to life or transparent to God, in some way--the failure of Doing, I guess, is where the church was first realized as having failed.

E.E. Cummings said it for me a long time ago back in seminary in his play about Santa Claus. Perhaps you've read it? He puts words into the mouth of Santa Clause--I can't remember if it was Santa Claus or the devil disguised as Santa Claus. One or the other, anyway, said to the group who is about to kill him, "So you've been betrayed. So you've been tricked. We've all been tricked. I've been tricked, too. I say it and you know it in your hearts. Not one of us is whole. Not one of us is whole." Our doing was no longer whole. It no longer translated you into life. It somehow fell short of becoming transparent to life.

When I was able to say that the church had betrayed me, then I saw that basically I didn't experience the church as betraying me. I first experience myself as betraying the church. When I was able to say that the church had betrayed me, then I saw the depth of my own betrayal of the church.

One of my responses to that situation was that I refused to be ordained. I decided it was more noble not to be ordained. I somehow couldn't leave the church, but I decided that at least I would not participate in the inauthenticity of a stupid ordination service--go around playing that silly role that they call being a minister.

We were talking about it at Presidium just the other day. In the opening lecture Bob Johnston told how a cab driver had asked them while driving from the airport here if they were ministers, and they refused to answer. They just wouldn't say. We've all participated in the inauthenticity of the activity of the church.

I think now I could very easily be ordained--or not ordained, depending on what was required or what was needed.

One of the places that I came to terms with that was in Ireland. We had finished our course in Kilkenny and some of the ministers took us out to a public pub. We were in a room to ourselves. I left the group and went into the public bar to see what was going on. The ministers--there were about 6 of them that took us there--were all dressed in their collars and their--whatever else you call that, and they obviously stood out on the pub, not obnoxiously, but they stood out from the other people there in the pub. ✓Father Delaney followed me into the public pub and we kept sitting there. I was sort of back about ten feet watching myself and Father Delaney as we were there in the pub. The thing I noticed was that Father Delaney would get just instant responses from people. Nobody there knew his name. They didn't come up and say, "Father Delaney." They just said, "Hello, Father," and they would have a conversation and something would happen. I wasn't quite sure what it was but I saw something happening there.

Then it cooccurred to me that if I could somehow reach over and quietly slip the collar from Father Delaney's neck, he'd just disappear. Poof! If I could just somehow slip over and get it before he could see it, then he would no longer be there--that all he was was just sheer role. Nothing more, just a role.

Then I looked around and wondered if maybe I swiped that guitar and hid it that that guitarist would disappear too. And maybe if I took the apron from the bartender, maybe he would disappear too. Then I looked around, and what I saw was that there were just a lot of Irishmen around there. They were playing a role. They were playing like they were Irishmen. Suppose you could just sort of yank Ireland out of history, would they disappear?

Do you see what I'm saying? You're nothing but a role. You go around playing American. When we all are in the same country and go around playing the same thing, it looks like we're something else besides a role. But when you get over to Ireland and you see everybody's playing the role of an Irishman, then you're clear: you're nothing but a role.

The issue no longer is whether you play a role. The issue is whether your role becomes an authentic role. That's the first point in my model underneath the category of Transparent Doing, that it is Sheer Role. And the issue there is whether that role is an authentic role. Doing is something you just invent. And in inventing your doing, you invent your being. You just decide out over nothing in the midst of the givenness that you've got given to you. You decide your role. You can't help showing up an American, But you decide the form, you decide the style of that role and that doing. That is an act of courage. In the midst of deciding that role, you say what you decide to do, what you decide to act out. How you decide to act that out tells you what you know.

You've experienced that trying to live. When you can't really decide who it is you are, you go about doing something, or you get some sort of impulse to act (Bultmann, Paragraph 11). In 5th City when we couldn't really decide to know what strategies we needed to operate out of, or the goals we needed, or where we needed to move next, we began doing things. That breaks you loose to know what it is that you know. When you can't decide what thrust you should be having at this moment, you decide what tactics you are going to use. But that's not really the key here. The key here is that what you do decides your being.

I am my role. If you change my roles, you change me. When you become a husband rather than a single family, that's a different role you play, and that means you're a different person. I thought it was very interesting to watch what happened to JFK when he became President. Maybe you remember the kind of shifts that took place in that man, or maybe just the physical differences that were obvious. But the internal change that occurred in the man when he took on a new role! You shift a person's role and you shift that person's being.

If any of you have acted you've experienced that. Even when you just play like being another role, that does something to you interiorly. That does something to your being. That does something to who you are at the bottom of your life—just playing. I've often wanted to talk to people who spy. I'd like to know how it is that they hold themselves together in the midst of having to play many many different roles, and what it is that gives them consistency in their life when they have to constantly play a role that they would not otherwise play.

This gives me my second category under Transparent Doing, and that's integrity, Radical Integrity. By radical I mean foundational. Probably I'm more clear here than with the others that this is one of the categories that I would want to put under the category of Transparent Doing, which is the intensification of Obedience and Prayer. But I'm probably least clear in terms of articulating what Radical Integrity means, least clear in being able to say what it is. I'm clear that it's not some sort of moralism, some sort of morality. It's not feeling good about having done the right thing. It's not having known that you've done the right thing and therefore you can sleep at night. It's not a removal from the ambiguities of deciding between thousands of alternatives. I can't say what I mean by Radical Integrity. I can point to what it does. What it does is that it focuses your total life into one whumpf. It focuses your total being into one Doing, so that everything you do is but one doing. Every moment of your life becomes one whom.

Napoleon came to my mind as I was reflecting on this. He was a man of integrity, however demonic that might have been. I was reminded of how he could stand before hundreds and thousands of troops and in one speech so address the bottom of their lives that they could go willingly into battle knowing that they were going to die, knowing there was no chance of coming out of the battle---one address. The man with Radical Integrity in his life becomes a VCOM and his life becomes transparent to the mystery.

The lazer beam was another image I toyed with. I don't know enough about lazer beams, but it would be a focusing of the power of the total energy into one small beam. Maybe something like that.

The other way I thought of it was with buildings. Have you been on top of buildings and begun to feel them sway back and forth? I suspect the Hancock building does that. I've not been there but I suspect it does. How many feet does the Hancock building sway? About 5 feet? Integrity is whatever it is that holds that building together. Integrity is the steel in the midst of that building that when it sways it doesn't crack and fall. That begins to point to integrity. Integrity is that steel.

Integrity also is the basis of relationship. If you are one person today relative to integrity and another person tomorrow, I don't know how to relate to you--if you're that kind of a schizoid. If I am one person today integrity-wise and somebody else tomorrow, I have no way to relate to my world, or I have to recreate my situation. You have no way to relate to the given situation in any kind of depth way save you have integrity. That doesn't say what integrity is either, does it?

All I can say is where you begin. I'm fairly confident that where you begin is at your own death. No man can be a man of integrity save he is a dead man. Only the man whose life is given can be a man of integrity. Only when your life is already given is it possible to be a man of integrity.

I don't especially agree with a lot of the things Eldridge Cleaver says, but a passage from one of his books, Papers after Prison or something like that, struck me. He tells the story of when he was caught in a house and the bullets were flying and tear gas was there and he was almost at the point of losing consciousness, and he decided that he was going to die. When he decided that he was going to die, he said goodbye to his wife in his own imagination, and to whatever else you say goodbye to when you are dying. Then he didn't die, but by a miracle escaped death. All he got was one bullet in the leg. What he said after it was, "Eldridge Cleaver died in that house. Eldridge Cleaver no longer exists. All that's left is force. All that's left is a thrust."

A man of integrity is a man who is already a dead man, so that what is left is a thrust. It's when you stand in the face of the final end of your own life, it's when you stand in the face of your own death, it's when you look full in the face of life that you can get down to whatever it is that creates a man of integrity. It's there that life then becomes stripped of all the unnecessary things and then you can look to where your integrity lies. When in the face of your own death you can affirm your total life, then you begin to get a hold of what you mean by Radical Integrity.

The third category which I'd want to use to talk about Transparent Doing, the depth of doing which releases life, is Final Commitment. Transparent Doing is always a manifestation of Final Commitment. That is to say, any doing that you do that's going to be Transparent Doing, any doing that you do that's going to be transparent to the depths of life, is going to be doing that comes out of Final Commitment. I think you are finally committed or you just don't do anything, finally.

If you are going to be a school teacher, then your commitment to being a school teacher has got to be for the rest of your life, life-long. If you're going to be married, it's got to be life-long. It's got to be for life. If you're going to be in the Order, it's a life-long commitment. No doing, no transparent doing comes out of any commitment that is not life-long. If you're going to really sweep the floor and if sweeping the floor is going to be transparent being, then you're sweeping floors at that moment for your total life. You sweep floors for life-long. Either you're here for life or you're not totally here--period. Either you're a school teacher for life, or you're not totally a school teacher. Do you see that is just the flip side of being able to affirm your life as significant? Any time you affirm your life as significant, you are totally life-long committed.

The tragedy at the bottom of the vocation crisis is the tragedy that comes out of a person not being able to commit his life in a life-long commitment. The tragedy there is that he cannot affirm his life as significant, because committing your life is a life-long commitment is simply the flip side of being able to affirm your total life as good, as significant. That's the tragedy, for me, at the bottom of the vocation crisis.

You know the offense that people experience when you assign them to do a time-line of their whole life. The offense there is that to make a timeline of your whole life means that you decide to commit your total life somewhere, The offense behind that is that you have to decide to receive your life as significant before you can make out a life-long timeline.

At our academy last quarter we ended by handing them a document to fill out on the way home on the plane or whatever. We intended to put it at the beginning of the week but certain things didn't permit it. One of the five parts of the document was that they put out a 48 year timeline of their life. We don't recommend sending people out that way at the end of the academy. One young lady got so offended that she almost didn't come to the closing celebration. She must have gotten over it because her mother is scheduled to come to the next one.

A commitment is life-long if the doing that's to come out of that life is going to be transparent.

Final Commitment also is always a commitment to a wider area. Standing constantly before a widening arena of responsibility always comes before the decision that you're going to be committed. Nobody ever gets seduced into being committed. You decide to be committed and then something shows up for you to be committed to. Commitment doesn't just happen. It always requires a prior decision if you're going to be committed and then you find yourself always being open to wider and wider arenas of responsibility. But it is always based on that prior decision. This for me is the Preparation that Kazantzakis talks about. If you haven't made a prior decision to be committed, you better not listen too closely to the cry, or you're going to find yourself in water that's over your head.

The third way I'd talk about final commitment you have pretty well covered today, and that's radical assignment. Final Commitment is radical assignment. That assignment first of all is from God. You experience yourself sent by God. The way life is has sent you to this particular time and space. The total process of history has sent you to this particular moment to do that particular task. It's out of that kind of sent-ness that transparent action comes.

You're also radically assigned by man--or you somehow have a symbol--some group, some man that sends you out to your particular work. Without that you've already noticed that your work doesn't have any real significance, and without that you don't have accountability which holds you self-consciously to your commitment. We forget that here because we're always sending ourselves out and are under that kind of discipline. If any of you stayed around to talk to the North Shore people after the celebration in which we sent them out a few days ago, you would have heard the radical address that that send-out was for those people. One man told me he had never experienced anything like that in his whole life. He said he wanted to go to the bathroom, he wanted to cry, and he wanted to run, all at the same time, and wasn't able to do any of them. He was literally shaken by that. Transparent Doing comes out of Final Commitment, that for one thing is Radical Assignment.

Finally, the Final Commitment is always a graveside view. It's always a view from the side of your own grave, in which you see the finality of every act and the nothingness of every act. I suppose if there's anybody here who hasn't been through the Odyssey, you're still in for it, but all of us who have been there have experienced working on our own grave plot and polishing it three hours in that Odyssey. Maybe you experienced it there--just the finality of every act, and the nothingness of every act.

One of the ways I get over that is I say to myself that a few years from now, oh say about a million, they're going to find one of our models such as the sodality triangles and they're going to say, "Oh, yes, that's one of those strange odd hieroglyphics that those people were doing some time in between Ramses II and Einstein." They're not even going to remember that we did them. It was just something that happened between Ramses II and Einstein.

It's in the grave view where you see the finality of every act and the nothingness of every act that the courage is borne to do the transparent deed.

The fourth dimension of the transparent deed is Transparent Authenticity. That's not a good category because it's repeating a category that's in the title, but I couldn't think of another way to say that. Maybe you can. Whereas I concluded talking about Radical Integrity with the grave and Final Commitment with death, with Transparent Authenticity I have to begin talking about the grave. In a sense all you're doing when you're talking about Transparent Doing is talking about Transparent Authenticity. It's like you were looking at your total life and deciding whether or not that was going to be your life or not. You have to see yourself. I like the image of standing at the grave edge the way that you stand on the edge of a diving board, looking back down the

whole long diving board that's your life. As you look at your life, you decide whether to receive that life as authentic. When I'm deciding how I'm going to visit someone in Fifth City or when I'm deciding how I'm going to study my course in college or how I'm going to do my job as a secretary, I stand on the edge of my grave and look at my total life and decide in that light the style that being a secretary has to embody for it to be authentic.

You see two men doing virtually the same thing. One of them makes you want to vomit, the other one gives you back your life. Sometimes you hear two men saying the very same thing to you. One of them you dismiss as nothing, the other one addresses the bottom of your life--the same words. It's not what's done, it's the style, the authenticity of the act. That is born at the graveside in daring to stand before your own death, and deciding to affirm your life--your miserable, failing, succeeding, wondrous life, as significant. Transparent authenticity is deciding out of your grave.

Secondly, Transparent Authenticity is deciding the will of God. It's observing, judging, weighing up, deciding, giving due consideration to men, circumstances and principles, motives, prospects, values, purposes, etc., etc., etc., and then you decide. It is the free venture in which you literally decide and experience yourself as deciding the will of God. You experience the decision that you've made as guidance. I don't want to go much further into this because you're all familiar with Bonhoeffer, Paragraph 3. Transparent Authenticity is experiencing your decision as deciding the will of God.

Thirdly--and I want to center here--Transparent Authenticity is experiencing yourself in the role of Jesus. I am Gautama. I am Jesus. It's where you elect to elect your election. It's something like when Jesus said, "I and the Father are one. I don't do anything except what my father does. It's not just me acting, it's me and my father. We're the one doing this."

Maybe you've experienced this in walking into a classroom to teach a class, where you decide to play a role which shoves the other people back over against the mystery, depth, and greatness of their own lives, and shoves them up against the comprehensive, futuristic, and intentional, and breaks them open to awe. You decide to play the role of God. --That's poetic. You never play the role of God. But your doing becomes transparent to God. Your doing becomes transparent to the futuristic, intentional and comprehensive. Your doing becomes transparent to the mystery of being which gives a person back the mystery, greatness, and depth of his own existence.

They came to Jesus and they said, "are you ready to go to the feast?" Jesus said, "You go on along. I'm not ready to go yet, because when I go to the feast, all of history is going to be altered. And it's not time yet to do that little bit of alteration. So you go on to the feast." You be very careful when you're playing this role. You don't just go to the feast because you want to go to the feast. You decide that you go to the feast because you know that history is rocked by that.

In Transparent Doing as Sheer Role, you're inventing doing, which is inventing being. In Transparent Doing as Transparent Authenticity you're transmitting being. The doing that you do as Sheer Role which invents being becomes the doing which transmits being. When you do transparent doing, you transmit being.

This is what Kazantzakis I think meant when he said you turn matter into spirit. It doesn't matter what you're doing--cutting a rock, giving birth to children. If you're doing it authentically, you're turning matter into spirit. D.H. Lawrence's poem "We are the transmitters of Life" also comes to mind. "When you fail to transmit life, life fails to flow through you. When you transmit life into your work, life, still more life, rushes in to compensate. It doesn't matter what it is. Maybe it's just the whiteness of a washed pocket handkerchief." One becomes a transmitter of life when his doing is transparent.

The betrayal of the church which was not the church's betrayal but was my betrayal of the church and your betrayal of the church is now being repented for. It's the New Religious Mode and the New Social Vehicle, the sodality work, the Ecclesiola, and the tactical models for the local congregation that is repenting for that betrayal. We've seen the innocent suffering, the dehumanization. We've turned from that and we're in the midst of abolishing that within ourselves. Then we've got 37 years until 2007 according to our time line to finish--orcontinue--the job of repenting.

Whenever you find repentance going on, you find lives being laid down. Finally that's all you're talking about with Transparent Doing. Transparent Doing is finally the crucifixion. That sums up everything you've got to say. Maybe it's appropriate that we stand conscious in our thinking to the Transparent Doing during this week of Passion. The journey that is Transparent Doing is the journey of the cross, the journey of Passion, the body on the line which calls forth the divine response, which demands the divine response.

The thing that supports a community, the thing that overlays love on a community is the style of life which embodies the crucifixion principle. Tactical models may be the tools. But what cares for a community, what finally overlays love on a community is a style of life in which people see day after day after day a style of life in which somebody's body is there on the line on their behalf. That's what cares for a community.

The style of the cruciform life is always magic. It's not doing a good job. It's not doing something efficient. It's not getting so many people to RS-1. The style of the cruciform principle becomes transparent--like magic that awakens, that enflames, that enobles, that calls forth a divine response, that elicits humanness from whoever it touches.

Two people came to Jesus and said, "who is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, and who will be able to sit on the right hand of you?" They were implying, "If it's OK with you, we'd like for it to be us." Jesus answered them very simply: "Are ye able to drink the cup?"