

COMMISSIONING 101 HOUSES

To what shall I compare the Long March of Care? It is like a tiny grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. As a seed, it is the smallest of them all, but it grows to be the biggest of plants. It becomes a tree, big enough for birds to come and nest in its branches. It is like yeast, which when taken by a woman and put into three measures of flour, causes the whole lot to rise. It is like a treasure which has been buried, and when found, it is buried again, and the man who buries it sells all his possessions to buy the field in which the treasure lay. The Long March of Care is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he has found a single pearl of value, he sells all his possessions and buys the pearl. It is like a big net, thrown into the sea, to collect fish. When it is full, the fishermen haul it ashore and sit down to pick out the good ones from the barrels, but they throw away the bad ones.

That is how it will be at the end of the world. The angels will go out and pick out the wicked from the good and throw them into the blazing furnace. There will be tears and bitter regrets. "Have you grasped all this?" he asked them. "Yes," they replied. "Well, you can see then," returned Jesus, "that everyone who knows the Dark Night and goes on the Long March is like the householder who can produce from his stores both the new and the old."

It used to be a simple matter to deploy ourselves across the globe. It was a matter of getting a few people together, singing a few songs and off we went. Before 1968, we did not deploy people at all. This morning, I find I deeply resent having to go. But then, I remember resenting having to come. It occurs to me that I will always be like Peter--every time the transparency appears, I will be the one to say, "Well, let's just build some extra dormitories here on this mountain and stay for awhile." At that moment, the Word always has to come and say, "Get behind me." The Word knows that is the best place for me to be. From that position, it is hard to avoid following the Word into the future; but it is a painful task.

This morning we call 101 Religious Houses into being across the globe. The significance of the charts of the Houses is that we have discovered that three Houses can do a region. That means a thousand Houses can do the world. What we do today is the tithe.

There are three occasions after which this commissioning will be consummated. This morning, we commission the network of 101 Houses. At the end of August, the Global Priors gather in Chicago to settle the assignments of personnel into the Houses. Finally, the third week in September, the Areas will gather in the Area cities to celebrate the accomplished fact of those Houses, and to bestow the banners and iron crosses and plaques which are the concretion of this global network.

If you need any more evidence that we are a brand new reality, let me remind you that all three of those events are first-time-ever happenings for us. We have never met as Areas; the Global Priors have never met; and we have never met as this kind of Movemental Order Council.

The Area gathering, the third week in September, is significant for us in that it represents, embodies and concretizes our Turn to the World. We have not wanted to go Areal. I have been scared to death about it. I am afraid we think Areas are going to be something, and when we think something is something, then people begin to think that they are somebodies when they are connected with that reality. The Areas have become necessary. They have become necessary because of the work we have done this summer. We are not going to have new villages in Korea, new villages in the Philippines, guilds all over this continent, without a coordinating dynamic which the Area can supply.

We are just beginning to focus the intensity of spirituality on local parish communities, in such a way that signs of resurrection and resurgence are born. That requires the Area. It is also true that the Area is the practical tension between the local and the global. When I am in my postage stamp doing my parish experiment, and I am called upon to do the Area as well, I experience the local-global tension out of which the New Social Vehicle will be forged.

But, let us remember, the Areas are nothing. They are simply the web of destiny within which local man takes hold of his responsibility for the entire earth.

The third week in September, we will gather and celebrate the accomplished fact of this network of Houses. At the end of August, the Global Priors assigned to Areas, together with the Global Priors assigned to Centrums ~~at~~ the several Nexus that will come into being, will gather to settle the assignments. After that, the moves will begin.

The significance of this, for me, is that we have become a massive movement. No one person can, any longer, get his mind around all that is going on. This is the last time we can make assignments the way they have been made. There no longer is any small group that knows all the data. It is also a sign of our practicality as a global movement. One congregation worked on practicalizing our globality this summer. Now, it is an accomplished fact.

There is no status in being a Global Prior. The only reason the 23 who are invited are coming is because they show up. They are, simply speaking, the most likely 23 to be here when we have the meeting. They have charisma, I guess, but only because they show up and they show up and they show up. That is what it means to be a Global Prior. That is what it means to have charisma in whatever structure you are operating.

The significance of this final session of this Global Order Council is that we are assigned to the metamorphosis of the Church. I almost started this talk this morning by saying, "Members of the staff of the Ecumenical Institute, members of the staff of the ICA, Metro Cadre members, Local Church Experiment Galaxies, ladies and gentlemen, guests," and on and on. Then it occurred to me, that is how the world is. Only in cloister can you stand up and have only one group to address. We are a complex body.

We are the metamorphosis of the Church. We have broken through practically, not just theoretically, what we have called the three perversions of the Church. We have broken through doctrinalism. At one point, we used to think you could be a part of this outfit if you were at least Christian. This summer, we

discovered that people who were Jews or Humanists or anything else did just fine, and that the Long March requires no doctrinal qualifications or consensus. We have broken through institutionalism. Things came off this summer beyond our wildest expectations without any visible sign of structure. It is amazing how things happen around here without bureaucracy.

We are taking care of community-ism, too, and this morning is the evidence. No human community after months of the abundant life we have had, would deliberately break it up and scatter to the globe. The fact that we have moved beyond community-ism is demonstrated in our decision this morning to take this abundant life we have had and break it on behalf of the world.

When people stand up in this room to represent the Areas, they are not proxies as I had at first told myself. It occurred to me that to be under assignment is to be under assignment to the globe and therefore, you have the right and the responsibility to stand up for Area Lagos if that is where the hole is. We could put any of us up. To be under assignment at all, is to be under global assignment. What we do here is sheer symbol.

This morning we are bringing to self-consciousness that which has already happened. We are doing what the Church always does - it blesses what the Lord has already done.

We are our own indicative. We know we are fragile and ridiculous. We know that when we go back and look at our House, or our family, or our parish experiment, for a moment they seem solid enough to last into eternity. And a moment later, they seem no more than a veil flapping in the wind. I say to you that the awareness of our fragileness and our ridiculousness is the Lord's mark on us. It is the thorn in our side and it is of infinite consolation to us. For it tells us that it is not by our own strength that we are sustained. It was not our idea to go on this Long March. We are being sent on behalf of the globe.

As we go into this year, trust the fact that we are, and that we are simply behind the Word, moving into the future.

--Ronald Clutz

