

SUMMER '75 CLOSING ADDRESS

Before we bring this Global Research Assembly to a close, and before we send ourselves into council or out in the mundanity of wherever it is that we will show up tomorrow morning, if we do, it is well that we have an opportunity for additional reflection, for it is a way of caring for ourselves. I have had occasion for second reflection within the last 24 hours. When this assignment fell upon me I had the initial response of wanting to run. I just wanted to clear out as fast as I could. I asked all kinds of internal questions such as, "Why me?" I usually have the response that gets a story going something like "Well, I am sure I won't be saying anything that someone else could not say." I think of myself as one who does not usually say it as well as somebody else could say it, so why me? It is only on second reflection that I am able to be here this afternoon.

This is a time for us to do profound reflection, for we find ourselves in a time of anticipation, a time of creation. I choose to call it that. I do not ask that you agree with that image, but finally, I suppose our task as human beings is to name whatever it is that we encounter. I find that our times are burgeoning. Our times, in the midst of obvious collapse and obvious transition are filled with a yearning for encounter with the deeps of life, a yearning for what I would call none other than the Mystery. People of every walk of life give evidence on all sides of desiring to plumb the deeps and to touch the creative deeps of life itself.

I would like to reflect with you today a bit about this summer and what it is all about. I want to do that under the catagories of hope, election, deed, and care. This has been the great assembly of the happening of hope, and the great assembly of the profound election, and the great assembly of the visible deed, and the great assembly of profound care.

But first, I would like just for a moment to look back over where we have been. I do not know how you have experienced the time that we have had together, but I have experienced these past two weeks as actually being at least three. I feel as if I have been here at least three weeks, if not three months, and almost forever. It is the interior feel of a slowing down of time.

I suppose that every one of us has a unique montage of the same kind of happening that these past weeks have been. However, I think you will agree that we have had some fantastic fun in the midst of it all. We worked and we produced. We have been a singing group and we have danced and we have dealt with the deeps that we hardly knew could even be touched. And in the midst of it all, some of us have found a growing resolve. What is it that appears on your montage? Is it the great Town Meeting of Kemper Village, the fireworks, or maybe just working in Task Force A, B, or T or Y? Maybe it was the half-day wonder or operating that stupid elevator. Perhaps it was the blisters on your hands or the muscles that were long forgotten but insisted on being remembered. Perhaps it was the interviews or the questionnaires or the brainstorm or procedures, or

hold that imaginably, but it is like hope is already in the world. The hope beyond hope already occurs here and when we perceive it and become aware of the profundity of the happening in our lives, then we have but one task. We stand as it were in a dark room and simply reach out and flip the switch. Perhaps it is too cute to say that we are the "switch-flippers" of history, but it is something as simple as that. The catalytic action that we engage in has a profound simplicity about it.

This summer revealed the happening of hope in our midst and allowed us to name it. My experience is that the hope beyond hope is not something that I think about or something that I do or something that I have. It is something that happens to me. It is something that happens to you. It gets done to you. You don't do it. It is something that you show up in, not something that you have. It is an impactment from without rather than anything that is conjured up interiorly. It is as if all of my perception and all man's perception of mystery that is grounded in life itself has "hoped" me. I realize that in the midst of all other hopes collapsing that I have been "hoped" by God himself. That realization is not something that just stands there. It is not something abstract. It is something that grasps the totality of a man's life. The question that comes now is how is that you embody the reality of that happening.

I sense that the kind of happening that we have discerned in the midst of the world and in the midst of our own lives, this happening of hope, would lead us to say that when we say our yes, we embody that hope. If anybody wants to look for it, then here it is. I am the hope of the world. You are the hope of the world. If you want to know where the hope is, look around. Don't look anywhere else, but look around where the profound "Yes" has been said. There that hope has become visible. We take that happening and we attempt to embody it in no other way but by action. This is far beyond anything that I ever conceived of when I thought about social action or engaging in society, far beyond any kind of romantic liberalism that I once embraced. It has to do with a profound action in the midst of society, with doing the absurd, with doing that which everyone else thinks is impossible.

If there was any doubt in anyone's mind about the fact that global social demonstration is hard work, they might have got a taste of it on that great Day of Global Social Demonstration. People here in our midst who worked perhaps harder than they had in years might have just caught a glimpse of the fact that global social demonstration will be hard, down-to-earth, nitty-gritty tasks. It will have to do with moving piles of dirt and planting bushes and picking up wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow load of broken glass. It will have to do with sweat and pain and it will have to do with profound patience as you encounter one person after another. It will have to do with not just one sign on the globe, but we are now saying eight signs, eight demonstrations. Eight signs of possibility in the midst of human suffering which in the first instance are not out to do any good to anyone who is doing them, but are out primarily to raise a sign across the globe to impact all of human history. You talk about all of human history and eight demonstrations and you see immediately 24 and many more, to build a band or a network around this globe where not only "every hour on the hour," but every moment of every day a demonstration, an action, an acting out of profound hope as an indication of our love.

We got clear some time ago that social demonstration has to do with love and that love, when it is profoundly human, is an act of sociological care. You want

blood and sociological form so that other men can look at it and see it and say "Aha! That is what it means to be human. That is what it means to live the full life." Immediately when I say that I ask, "What is it that is the hope beyond hope?" It has to do with facing squarely the reality that life is. When you shove through all of the specified tasks that you discern and shove to the bottom of life, what do you have to depend on, to trust in and to place your confidence in? It is not in what you have yourself. It is in standing squarely before the way life is and realizing that, finally, you trust the no-thing that is everything. That you stand as one who is naked before life and trust that for which man finally has no adequate name. For, once man names it, he knows that somehow, either out of his own piety or out of the reductions of social or cultural usage, as soon as he names it, he has lost it in reduction. Finally, you depend on and trust that No Thing . . . Nothing, which as far as I know has only been given one adequate word. You trust God.

It is hard to get this said, but the election has to do with rendering that which is invisible visible so that other people can see the hope that is there in the midst of life and can discern what it is that has happened to them in our time. In these days together I have often wondered what it means to show up in a time of hope as those who have been singled out. Out of all the possible people who could have been here, why me? why you? We are not too far wrong when we say "God only knows."

What I have come clear on, or at least is coming a little bit into focus, is that this is finally not a time for articulating hope in words so much as it is a time when the deed is to be done in history. You and I are called to perform the expressed deed and to engage in that which is seen. Therefore, we are engaged in Town Meeting and we are engaged in social demonstration. We are engaged in intra-global movement. When I say that I am hope or I am the embodiment of hope and that as a people there are those in the midst of Those Who Care who are in and of themselves hope, I know that the only way that is seen is that I am Town Meeting. I am Social Demonstration. Social demonstration is not something that is done out there. It is something that is profoundly interiorized in my being.

We look back on the 1960's as a time when there were certain kinds of demonstration that went on. They were times that called for protest. We are clear today, however, that the 1970's are a time for the demonstration of sociological possibility, of sociological form of humanness. This is a time for the demonstration of structures. It is like in a community you take the economic dynamic and put form to it. You take the social dynamic and put form to it. Then they spin within each other and set off a virtual pinwheel that is the political, until all three spin in the midst of a local community and people see it. They see it and it becomes a sign for their embracing that which has happened. This is not a time for saying the deed, but rather for doing the deed itself. It is the intensification of that to the point where our whole being becomes absurdly engaged in the not yet which we will never see. Our whole being becomes the acting out of the possibility, or rather the impossibility as other men call it.

I am sure you have heard of how it is that a certain group of people who were listed among Those Who Care were talked about by a man by the name of Pliney. He was talking about the early church, which, by the way, for the first 370 or so years of its history had every one of its top symbolic leaders martyred. Pliney

who are called to make visible the hope that has happened in the midst of life itself, then we had better care for ourselves. I do not mean care for ourselves for the sake of ourselves or for the sake of making it, somehow, but rather care for ourselves so that the world makes it, or so that all of life comes into its own. What I would say to you now is care for yourself. That means you do not depend on anyone else to care for you. You have already been chosen. You have been covenanted by life itself. Life has chosen you. You guard that covenant. You guard it with the very depths of your being, however that covenant gets expressed, whether it be with this body of people or whether it be in the covenant of your marriage. There is no time for those who have been chosen to take lightly the covenant that has been laid upon them. All of us show up with an experience before God of inadequacy, but the fact is that long before we came to consciousness, let alone long before we came to profound consciousness, the Mystery itself had covenanted with us to be a peculiar people in history. That covenant gets acted out in the family.

I suppose it needs to be said that there are no easy rules for carrying out that covenant. There is no pat answer for how it will be carried out. It is as if that covenant, the fact that you have been chosen to live out your hope beyond hope in relationship to another, is a givenness of life. A few minutes before I got married I asked the preacher a question that had been on my mind for a long time. "What does it mean when you say that you love the whole world to love one person?" I do not recall that he gave me an adequate answer at the time, so I went ahead with it anyway. But what I have come to find out is that in expressing that covenant if I say "I love you" to my wife, that has nothing whatsoever to do with being an option. That is not a decision for me. That is a part of my life. That is a part of who I am. That is my being. How is it that you and I decide what absolutes we will live out of? How do we drive a stake down into life and then stand, in spite of all? And again, the standing as those who are chosen has nothing to do with your own interior self-reliance or your hard-headed stoic decisions. It has to do with the surrendering of your life to Him who stands you up in the first place. That is to say that you interiorize the covenant that the mystery has created with you in your life.

Well, there is yet another thing that I would say to guard, and that is to guard the symbolic. Guard the symbols out of which you live. You have heard that before. We have experimented in the last few weeks with what it would mean to create symbols that would sustain people who do not come out of the symbol system of Christianity that has branded most of us either consciously or unconsciously. We have attempted to experiment and create symbols that are secular. We are out to create simply the way by which a man, as a secular man, can symbolize the profound depths that he already is. Do not mistake that experiment for disregard or taking lightly the symbolic. Guard the symbol.

And, guard our corporateness. Yesterday, corporateness was a good way to get things done. Today, we are nothing without it. That is to say that there is no other way to ever move to embody and make visible hope in the midst of society. The strange thing is that you and I have been given eyes with which to see. We have been given a chance to care profoundly, to serve mankind effectively. We have been given a chance to shape history and we dare not fail.

The words of a familiar poem: "Give and it shall be given unto you is still

the truth about life. But giving life is not so easy. It doesn't mean handing it out to some mean fool or letting the living dead eat you up. It means kindling the life quality where it was not." That is what we are about. We cannot allow any trivia or any self-indulgence to ever lead us to fail. We are the visible hope of the world. And, it just may be that all of the future of humanness itself rests with us.

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