

LIVING INTENSITY: THE FULFILLED LIFE

Living out of a story, for some of us, is a new experience. To discover that you live out of a story is an amazing thing. But then, to discover that you have to create the story you live out of is experienced as amazement on top of amazement. And to discover that you have continually to create the stories which create your life, is amazement within amazement within amazement. Then (and I think this is probably where we are in our journey) to discover that there is an objective story underneath all that; way down under is that fourth level (like those religious charts) of utter objectivity.

For most of us, what has happened in our story dimension is that, perhaps for the first time, we have hit That Which is Just There. The image of "going through the veils" is one which, in itself, is just a delight to my life: to reach out and discover in life there is a veil which is hiding something. That takes fifteen years to get over, although that fifteen years might be lived in two minutes. And, you can go through that veil. People have done it. When you discover you are a changed person, that change is even greater than the discovery of the veil. The stillness which happens in this room points to that experience and the power it has in our lives. You discover life is a continual process of going through veils upon veils upon veils upon veils. Then, where we have been this summer, we have come before that black veil. Previously you were a spirit man who had gone through the veil; and as soon as the Lord dropped a new veil, you already had the zippers built in. Passing through them is almost instantaneous, almost the speed of lightning. But then you hit that black veil - that veil is not going to go away. Sheer objectivity! That is what we hit. It shook us to the bottom. We ran away from it. We tried to deal with it. We spun out.

Our story has to do primarily with the category of Space. Although this event occurred long before, in '68 or even earlier, the category of space began to creep into our life, or only began to creep into our story along about last year. You can give it the name of Sanctification if you wish. Boy was that a delightful experience! Yet we have been uneasy about Space. There was always a smell of "phoniness" about the color quads. Sanctification is a word that is too easily grasped. Last year you could not have said this. Someone suggested we need to forget the word "Sanctification" and talk about the 'Holy Life'. I like that much better. It is even harder to get a hold of. You cannot look up the Holy Life in any theological dictionary. -

The last time we had something like this happen to us, it happened out there in the objective sociological world where it was much easier to deal with in our mission. For a long time we were wrestling with Knowing. The move to the West Side and the beginning of 5th City symbolized our intent to move from the struggle with Knowing to struggle with Doing. As this Doing was grounded in our expenditure we experienced a profound polarity; a spark shot through us individually and corporately, and the bottom dropped out, and we discovered the third category of being. The same process has now happened in our experience of Justification and Sanctification, of Time and Space. Although the turn to the world has to be marked with a term like "Sanctification" or "Space," we are discovering that there is a long journey ahead which categories like Space or Sanctification are not going to be able to hold. It is analogous to the time when we grabbed 5th City, or when we picked up the world. There we quickly discovered that Doing would not hold who we were or what we were about. We were more than our Doing or our Knowing. We were Being. We still had the struggle with our Knowing, And more overwhelming, we had our struggle with our Doing. But most awe-filled of all was our struggle with Being.

I am inadequate to talk about how we hold that long-range experience which lies ahead. It is different from Sanctification and Justification, Holiness or Perfection. The intensification of that basic polarity of Time and Space, Justification and Sanctification, is the conjunction of those two experiences. We are going to be living in that intensification not in Sanctification alone, nor in Justification alone.

I know that statement is true because of the way questions come at my life.

I have been recording how my questions have come. I used to be concerned only with Time. If someone asked me to do a lecture my first question was "How Long?" Whether one stood in front of a blackboard for forty minutes or two hours didn't matter. The question was one of time and space, and other such words. Than spatial

categories dominated my questions which became something like "How far?" or "How much?" Perhaps it is something like volume. How much space do I have to take in?

Now take both living in the intensification of time and space. You find yourself out here in the middle of the room with not even a blackboard on which to do spatial images. You have to live a life in the gaze of a bunch of people; you perform. This new lecture style begins to illustrate a bit of the quality of what we are doing in relation to intensity. We did not even know the significance of what we were doing when we knocked the ends out of the center table and made one another crawl out on center stage this summer.

"How long? How long? How long? we screamed out of our bowels. And the Lord answered back through our own lips, "For all time." That is what living this life has to be about; that is what your story has to deal with, and what the wedge-blade points out. Temporal images are the way you relate to the Mystery. It is your answer to "How long?" And the answer is forever, for all time, before God. We have lived out of that question most of our lives.

Today we are aware of a second question now in our corporate consciousness. This question has been with us a relatively short time. It has to do with "How far?" The answer came out of our being "Global." I remember the first time "All the Earth Belongs to All" appeared on the cover of i.e. All of us screamed. We screamed again when those global assignments came out. "How far is life going to take us? How far does this life extend? How far am I going to be spread?" And the answer comes, "All the earth." That is how far: all the universe.

The third question is "How much?" That is where I am trapped. The other questions were about my life too. How long my life? All of it, all of time. How far, for my life? All of space, all of it. "How much?" is a different "much" than space. It is a "much" which has words like "acceleration," "intensity," and "density." How much alive am I going to be? The Sanctification course talks about a fulfilled life; that is this category. How much? All of it -- all the intensity you be. And you remember the shudder that ran down your being when you heard "all of it." All of it had to do only with time. We have lived that 'shudder' for a hundred years. In the last eight years the shudder has gone down into our being with an answer like "all of it"--all of your life. That is the state of our BE-ing. That is where we are and where our story is, and where we have to deal with whatever the Lord sends us to deal with.

In closing, I am going to claim a promise concerning where we have to look first as a body of people. It came clear for me yesterday when we stood before those assignments that we are going to expend our lives together. Not too long ago we did not care where we were assigned. We just wanted to know how long: Two hours? two weeks? two years? Tell me how much time I have to spend and I can deal with it. Then someone said "forever," and we cried out, "Forever!" When that happened, we began to step into spatial categories. Where am I going to be? was the key question.

Lately, I have watched our colleagues sneak down to the assignment office, making believe they are going to talk to the Order relations people. They go through that office and "by mistake" turn left and claim they had never seen the room before! When you checked your name on that board I will bet you did not even imagine that Space was an important consideration. More important was, How much of me is this assignment going to require? Who am I going to be with? What issues will consume my life? That is what I mean by intensity. With whom am I going to have to deal intensely? With whom am I going to have to deal with acceleration, watching his life speed up and get bigger and bigger quarter after quarter? That is the question I asked yesterday. The question of the intense life focuses most in the area of Covenant. That means covenant with yourself, covenant with your family and covenant with this Order. Those three covenants mark us. We are in an extremely fragile situation because, now, all three of those covenants cannot just be dealt with in terms of time. When I got married that is all I thought about, how long do I have to stand living with this person, I was making a promise and it was going to be forever. When I joined this Order I do not even remember the question they asked after the first intern year; I showed up before a bunch of somber-faced characters whose only concern was how long, and would I say "forever"?

Now, time has picked up a new dimension. The category of space has been added. We have not yet struggled through that, either for ourselves or for our families, or for the Order, but we must. We will need to learn to lecture about it, learn to pray our way through it. What happens in your life when you discover your space has suddenly been exploded? You could take an elevator up to the eighth floor and look for an open window--that is one way; or you can turn into a little boy again--that is another way. What does happen when you have discovered that somehow you have stretched yourself over space, or that space has become so big inside of you? That happens

in a family when suddenly there is a click and the members find they are global men. By that, I mean interior spaciousness. They are not just confined to this little town, this parish this nation; they live out of the globe. How do you take a family through that transition? How do you take an Order through that transition? We are so lucky we got this far. Every other religious order gets its roots down in one spot. They pick one little town out in the provinces somewhere to express their mission. They have not conquered global space. We are the only Order in the Philipines, for instance, that covers the whole of the islands. We are the only Order that claims this planet as our vocation.

Now how do you live this intensity a fulfilled life within yourself, with your interior covenant? when you suddenly discover that the core of your being is a continually exploding ball of creativity, and that somehow Time and Space have come together and the bottom has dropped out, you are intensity, you are fulfilled.

You cannot stand it. We have worn the pavements out walking around at night trying to be our intensity. How do you stand it? How does a marriage stand it? How does a family stand to live true fulfillment? How does an Order live fulfilled? These are the questions we have to struggle with and its all here.

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