

GOING TO THE TWO MILLION

I welcome you to this Continental Council. I bring you greetings, first of all, from your "paraprophetic" Panchayat; I bring you greetings from your colleagues across the globe, the colleagues from the seven continents in which we work. I would also make bold to bring you greetings from those as-yet-unknown colleagues in the other two continents of the globe, who wait expectantly. This advent season is a good time to remember that.

We have been asked if we would share with you something of what it is that is happening across the globe at this point in the Movement. Normally, this is done at the beginning of a Council; but it seems appropriate that we do this before you go into your Area Meetings. I think we must start by saying how much we have appreciated being able to participate in this Council. I do not want, in any way, to attempt to pull together what it is that has gone on; that will be done later. But, I would want to point to some things I believe to be crucial to us relative to the Global Movement.

In this Council we have seen something of the emergence of the New Movement; we have seen and participated in the Order in its various forms. We have been able to hear and see a little of the great amount that has happened in a relatively brief time. I was impressed as people came into the building the first night. I would use the word elan to describe what I saw: there was a bouyancy, there was a vibrancy, there was a great anticipation manifest as people came through the door into this building in preparation for the council. Yet, you and I know that we have in this year experienced the wrath of "transition". We have experienced the Dark Night not only of the individual but of the corporate self-doubt. But here in this Council we have heard what it means to be those who stand in the midst of that Dark Night and manifest or witness to the beckoning of local man. It is the beckoning, the "come on", that says "come and see and trust that God is active and the new spirit is breaking loose and humanness is what it is about." It was great to see the region's names to hold ourselves before our assigned geography on behalf of the globe. It has been great to participate in the work, the expenditure of this Council and the celebration of that expenditure.

Then we have participated in, and manifest the new depth unity, We have kept our eyes focused on the task. We have honored the decision of the other to be the religious in our time. One could go on and on talking about those things that point to the greatness of this Council. Not the least of all would be the symposium; not least of all would be those vignettes spun the other night from the local community.

Why is this important for us? We are on the eve of leaving to visit across the world. We know other councils are going on - Europe has had its Council and Latin America is meeting at this time. SEAPAC meets soon, as does Africa-NAME and the Sub-Continent. Out of these councils one would anticipate nothing less than the same decision to win, the same decision to be our intent of who we are in history. I was reminded of another Council in Area Singapore, There were people from Bubun and Bontoa Human Development Projects who wanted to get to that Council. They could not afford plane fares even if they could have even gotten to the plane. They built a plan that said, "Let's go get a boat. So, they inkinded a boat and everything else needed for the boat, and

the thirty of them set off for Kelapa Dua to participate in that Council. That was the Council in which Area Singapore looked at its geography, taking it down to local communities. If I recall the fraction correctly, the Area discovered it is responsible for one-sixteenth of the communities of this globe! You can imagine what it did to them to see that this was their task. What is the percentage in North America? Once we stand before that, it gives some concretion to our image of Earthrise. I want to come back to this business of what we anticipate later on.

Last year you will remember that the Panchayat visited all the Houses across the world. This year, working out of a three or four year rhythm, we will visit each Area. The plan is that the Priors, and others from the Houses as can be assigned, would come together at the Area Houses, or some other place within the Area, where we would meet for a period of time. The image of the visit is forty-four hours, and the intent will be to look together at those questions and concerns we have discerned out of last July in Council, out of this Council here, and out of letters and reports that are crucial to our work and thrust across the world, as we head towards 1980 and our four year planning. We also see that this is going to be an opportunity when we again, like last year's work within the Areas, can confirm and expand the colleague network, particularly the Guardians. We are, therefore, recommending that on the first night of the Panchayat's visit in each Area that as many Guardians from within that Area would be gathered so they could participate in the event. Then, perhaps the next morning the Guardians accompanying the Panchayat would meet with the local area Guardians for a time of sharing, interchange, planning and brooding. There will be Guardians from the North American continent accompanying us; and we hope there will also be Guardians from Europe, SEAPAC, Latin America and Africa. We are looking forward to it. In January we go to SEAPAC and Latin America; in February we go to India and to North America; and in March we go to Africa, NAME and Europe.

Now, I do not want to try to reproduce the Global Order Report - we can all read that. I just want to touch on some of the things we have discerned, heard about and are looking forward to participating in relative to the Global-Continental priorities. First of all, Africa: we had a most amazing time with Jack Gilles the other day as he gave us a report on what was happening there. In Nairobi and with the whole work of the Kenya Wedge, LENS is linking the corporations directly into the local. I put this on the top of my list about our work with corporations and agencies - how they can relate and work directly with the local as they are themselves part of the new local. There are thirty-one people in the Human Development Training School in Nairobi, and they are entering into their first three projects after the School. Zambia has given us concern over these last few months; we are in regular contact with the State Department and the Zambia desk relative to the activities in that country and the welfare of our colleagues. But, they leave us to do the worry! They get on and do the work. Out of that one project, they have just recently been out to do twenty Town Meetings; they have been doing circuits in the six regions. I understand they plan to have completed 500 village meetings by July, training villagers to go out and do those forums themselves. The village people know how to move. They went into one part of their geography where they had no authorization, looked around, and said, "Well, what shall we do? We need a vehicle with which to get around, and we need some authorization letters." So a couple of young men went to work, got their authorization letters and obtained a vehicle from one of the government agencies. There was no use

having a vehicle without gas, so they inked their gas from the police and the army. With their authorization letters, they set out to get their job done. They are doing the nation out of that one project. That is a powerful image. There had been framing issues in Nigeria, but we want to report that the frame is firmed up and strong. Shell is working in some one thousand villages in Nigeria, and have asked us to consider doing a pilot scheme of working in ten of those villages. Wouldn't that be something? Again, the corporation to the local. There is some question raised following our last Global Council relative to our decision about Duaola. It does appear to be a shift in the consensus that instead of Duaola we look to Area Abajan and the Ivory Coast. NAME is working on their LENS and getting set up for their Town Meetings through UNICEF sponsorship. I took longer on this because this continent was our number one priority this year.

SEAPAC is all about circuits and cluster experiments. This has been the time of really getting the frame set up and doing those other things that allow them to be ready for Quarter III. The Hawaii campaign is set, New Zealand is ready to go, and New Guinea is heading down the road for an ITI very soon. In Area Singapore the two projects of Bontoa and Bubun are doing state campaigns, or getting themselves set to do the state-wide campaigns. They are going ahead with three schools in Bubun in Quarter II, and then to expanding their cluster. The report from Hong Kong tells us that the 24 consults in Mactan have been completed. Now they are looking toward the move on Ilo Ilo with the sponsorship of the World Bank. If you have not heard, the people in the World Bank say that the proposal on Ilo Ilo went through all the red tape quicker than anything else has ever gone through their procedures. Those people out there are excited. In Area Tokyo we would point particularly to the work that is going on with the corporations. In Cebu there are Town Meetings being held in a large department store of 6,000 staff. They are doing Town Meetings two and three times a week, morning and afternoon. They are working on the Guardians, they are working on LENS, they are working through that nation.

In Sub-Asia you will remember that our continental priority was Nava Gram Prayas explosion and focusing on the 232. They are building their steps towards the 2,500 and the 25,000. I wanted to point to two other things that were especially significant in this past quarter. The Maryknoll Order sent two of their people to check out the Nava Gram Prayas. They visited Maliwada and others. They sent back a report to the Order, and it is the most amazing statement we have read as yet on the Nava Gram Prayas. It is a testimonial to local people. What is more, those two men backed it up by saying, "We need to fund the work that is going on there." \$100,000 was the first part of their funding for that. Under the rubric of the Historic Church in that subcontinent, I would also point to a meeting with Bishop Palmer, the Methodist Bishop of Bombay, were he spelled out his vision to us of what he saw the role of the historic church could be. It is very clear that this man is out to see that the Historic Church and its local manifestation become the servant force in India. A couple of our colleagues took him to 5th City, and then into the Human Development Training School. He said, "That is what I want." In April he is going to return; I think we will move from the vision to do the rest of the planning. Around the subcontinent the Areas are also at work.

In Latin America there are Area Formulation Strategies. I think we would hold up, in particular, Jamaica. They are out to do their 216 Town Meetings. Well, you could go on and on.

Europe has developed something called the "Set" of Town Meeting. I get the image of something like a cluster. They are doing geographical coverage by getting those "Sets" in place across Europe. They are also working hard on Formation. By the time the Panchayat arrives, the house should be opened in Area Stockholm, although they are not certain as yet whether it will be Stockholm or Copenhagen. You can fill in all the details out of the global reports, letters, and so on.

What we discern as we look across what is happening in the world is a depth seriousness on our corporate behalf to be about the two million awakening phasing, our first global priority. Now it comes to me if anybody has problems about mass awakening, and the two million villages, there is a very simple exercise for you to do when you get up in the morning. Just sit down and write a list of the communities that you do not want to see awakened; or write down the names of the people you do not want to see awakened. That is a way of holding before ourselves the seriousness of our decision. Every last community; every last human being. There is a seriousness about that and you see it manifest across the globe. Let me read you a little bit of poetry:

"Several years ago we turned to the masses. This was symbolized by a minor preaching mission in India. Later the symbolism was deepened by the summer known as "The Turn to the World". What was discovered in India was that if you could get through the establishment structures to the local people they could understand and were ready to move. Going to the masses is a profound and complex image; it has to do with depth consciousness; it has to do with working with and through our bigotries; it has to do with the very last person; it has to do with the relations of time and space, with globality, with bending history, with the concept of care, with engagement, with faith, hope and love, with a new religious mode, and a new social vehicle, with church renewal, with sacrificial service, and so on. More precisely, going to the masses means all of the several billions of people in the whole world and the local communities, of which we said there were over seven hundred thousand in India alone. It means addressing all of the historic faiths in the world beyond Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism; and this includes the neo-pagans, or secular people everywhere. It means going to all religious bodies. It includes the permeation of all the secular structures: the governments of the globe, the international business communities, and the educational dynamics of the nations. It means going to the voluntary aspects of society and the disestablishment thrusts."

It was good to rehearse that poetry. We are serious is the way we read our decision and our intent.

There are lots of other things we need to say; let me try and summarize it all. It has something to do with who we are. It has something to do with what we have intended in history. We are those who are concerned with the deeps of humanness. We are concerned with every last human being

getting his or her creativity into history. We are concerned to be the "nobodies". I find myself dicotomized over this Public Communications Team. I know that such jobs must be done, and we have to do it well. Yet, I smile when I hear people say, "We don't know who you are." That is the greatest compliment they have ever paid to us. We do not know who you are, but look and see what it is that is going on there and there and there. Well it goes with our intent of who we have decided to be, and what we have decided to be about. In many conversations we have spoken of ourselves as the pluriform body, the Pluriform Order. I found it helpful recently to remind myself that one of our early words was "Ecumenical". I wonder whether we do not need to take that word "Ecumenical" and blow the bottom out of it all over again in the light of the readiness of this world for what is genuine ecumenism in our time. We are ready for it; the world is ready for it. I noticed that it helped me clear away a lot of the confusing brush that gets raised in my mind whenever I start focusing on the pluriform body we are. This does not mean to ignore that, but it is to stand with the Hindu and to stand with the Buddhist and to stand with the whoever, and be about that one task in history, plumbing the deeps of the human spirit, then creating the poetry out of which we can live. I tend to feel we are still in no hurry - there is a little bit of pressure building up, but we are still in no hurry about our liturgical life. There is a little bit of pressure and we are going to work on it together - but it is not going to be some kind of syncrotism. Perhaps the Other World poetry will be our clue.

At a House party, given by some Guardian colleagues last week, there were quite a number of influential people shown the global movie. One of the men there, Mr. Shatami- born outside Kawangware, counselor for the Kenya mission at the United Nations and president of our board in Kenya - stood up and started to speak of the work of the ICA. Then, cutting all embarrassment from it, and with utter seriousness he used some words from ancient poetry reminding us: "I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to me." The fact that that man could ground our task as we have expressed it in our liturgy, is to me very profound, for I believe he is speaking on behalf of local people, to the North American continent, to the thirty-six regions of this continent: Be your intent for the sake of local people who are hungry, or are in prison.

