

EXPERIENCING YOUR EXPERIENCE

I thought that if you do not mind, I will finish the speech that I did not make last night.

There are four things relative to the shape of the Order that I stew about these days. The first is the sophistication. I don't mean that word; it's just that I don't have another one.

Secondly, is the intra-globality. For a long time most of us have been intra-global in spirit. What I mean here is that that spirit has to be given practical form. And will be, shortly--too shortly, probably for the comfort of any of us.

And the third thing is the Centrum. Now I'm not much interested in Centurms nor most any other thing that even hints of anything like organization. I can't stand the phrase "Area House". One day I think I will really be able to think dynamically. When that happens I know that the mission and the means of the mission will be interwoven: you will not be able to get them untangled. I still can untangle them. That is why it is hard to think about a Centrum or a Area House. I don't mind talking about a Religious House, but I cannot stand talking about an Area House. The Centrum is not a thing; it is an action. What happened on this trip when you saw what was going on in most of the Centurms just burned me up. It is not that you did not anticipate that they would burn you up; we built that in before they went out, so you would not get too upset. It is going to take time. Putting up the Centurms makes putting up the Hancock Building look like child's play.

The last one of that is going Area. We are way down the line on that. My one pause is that, although we know so much theoretically about what we mean with the awkward category of Xaverism, if it does not become just synonymous with our being, we are not going to do what we mean by going Areal.

The last point in the speech that I did not make has to do with the shape of the mission. On the other side of having done Town Meetings in every nation of the world (and I mean every nation of the world minus two or maybe two and a half continents), on the other side of having at least 24 Social Demonstrations our mission is going to be training. I refuse to enlarge on that for fear I will get into my speech, but that is the first thing. The next is the retreats, only we have to find another word. And the third category is other religious, but I do not mean that the way it sounds to me when I hear myself say it. Last is the new morality. I get irritated when someone approaches me once again with the solution to the family problem in our moment in history. I just die down inside. I want to scream. What goes on in the Order is necessarily but the intensification of what is going on in the world. And what is going on in the world is, I believe, the greatest transitional moment that the world has ever known, that history has ever known, relative to morality or ethics.

I had a talk this morning with one of my colleagues. We got to spinning and it was shocking how deep, in just a few seconds, we had gone with some little old moral issue. My mind went back to Ada. Back there, you might

spend a little time spinning on something like that, but you would never go down very far because there was a stable morality under you. And however invisible, however perverted, there was a stable ontology underneath it. Therefore it was easy for my Papa and Momma to train me: it was just black and white. A good boy was like this and a bad boy everybody in Ada knew what he was like. It was comparatively simple.

What burns me up these days is when someone wants me to sit down and talk with someone. What would you talk about if one of your colleagues gets in trouble with his marriage. What would you talk about? I am not talking about one of you in swaddling clothes. What would you talk about? This is slipping back into liberalism. And it is slipping back into the Ada, Ohio, mindset, where the whole universe is all resolved just under the surface and if you just sit and talk everyone can see how it is firm as all get out.

Now we are in a period of transition. Whether you like it or not we are on the edge of it. And you ought to be excited--I think spirit moments are exciting to me--to be in a moment of such fantastic transition. And we have got a job to do. Do you know what we are going to be doing? We are going to be giving concrete form to a new morality. And there is not anyone in the room who has more than a two-bit idea of what it is going to look like. But when you are in that condition, even a two-bit idea is really something, isn't it?

Now tighten your belt and stand tall. They are going to collapse around you, there is going to be some idiot who gets angry with his wife and packs up his two suitcases. There is not much you can do about that. He has not got guts enough to stand in a moment of transition, where to maintain your integrity--and I mean your integrity--you stand in an establishment, that you are no longer a part of, in order to build on the other side of the disestablishment, which you are not part of. Many of you will make it. That is all right. The command is Forward, Ho!

The day after tomorrow we are going to be talking in this area, and we are going to be talking about our doing. These Town Meetings and these Social Demonstrations are our doings. Next summer we are going to be up to our necks with the snowballing of Town Meetings and having to do more Social Demonstration in one year and plan for 8 more the following year. But it would not surprise me if the year after that, we might spend our whole summer on the new morality. Would it surprise you much?

That is not what I want to talk on. I want to talk on taking care of yourself. But taking care of yourself does have to do with what I was talking about, because if you do not take care of yourself, you will not be here in two summers. And you could very well not be here, of course. That goes for you old ones, as well as you younger ones.

The 10th chapter of the Gospel of John has really intrigued me. I just like the style.

It was winter and the festival of the Dedication was being held in Jerusalem. Jesus was walking in the temple precincts, in Solomon's Cloister. The Jew gathered round him and asked;  
'How long must you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah,

say so plainly.' 'I have told you,' said Jesus, 'but you do not believe. My deeds done in my Father's name are my credentials.'

Now that is for any of you who thinks that you have to have one more hunk of advocacy. They told me a story about somebody who went out and did something down in east Texas. And this woman knew someone who knew someone and she got on the telephone and in a few minutes the Secret Service men were checking to see if that town could have the Vice-President there. As far as I know, there wasn't a single bit of authorization for that Town Meeting in east Texas at all. Somebody's deeds are his credentials and as we walk into the future, we had better come off in Majuro. Our deeds are our credentials.

'My deeds done in my Father's name are my credentials...'

Once again the Jews picked up stones to stone him. At this Jesus said to them, "I have set before you many good deeds done by my Father's power; for which of these would you stone me?" The Jews replied, "We are not going to stone you for any good deed, but for your blasphemy. You, a mere man, claim to be a god." Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your own law, 'I, the Lord, said: "You are gods? Those are called gods to whom the word of God was delivered--and Scripture cannot be set aside. Then why do you charge me with blasphemy, because I, consecrated and sent into the world by the Father, said, "I am God's son. I am God's son. I am God's son.""

That has to do with taking care of yourself. Three times a day you are supposed to stand up and say, "I am God's son" and then you duck. But whether or not you duck, you had better say it three times a day.

Now, I do not know much about taking care of yourself. Of course that is a lie, for here I am. I do know something about it. However, it has only been recently that I knew that I knew something about it. Take care of yourself.

Today I am going to talk about experiencing your experience. Tomorrow I want to talk about the Dark Night of the Soul and taking care of yourself, and the time after that, about meditation and taking care of yourself. Then, the last of these noon talks will be on, "God Will Take Care of You."

We have used the figure of speech that we are like a stone that has been thrown up in the air. Every time I say this, I keep thinking of the stone as if it were a human being that thinks. He slows himself up and then he stops. He is making up his mind to come back. There is an arc up there, more like a curve. Right now we are at that point. I do not know whether the physics of this is very good, but we are on the curve.

We developed the discipline that gave us the thrust power to get ourselves in orbit. My mind goes back to when we did those triangles in 1971. We realized that there were spin-offs from the establishment which coagulated

and developed trends. Those trends really got loose from the atmosphere of the establishment and coagulated with larger trends, which gave them the leverage to turn around and penetrate the social fabric head-on. This occasions radical social change or revolution. And we developed among ourselves a discipline that gave us thrust, power to leave the atmosphere of the establishment. The coagulation is the bend that is taking place. Now we have turned. At that moment, you think, "Why did I ever get on this boat, anyway? It is too late; it is either go on or become a zombie -- one or the other. You are out there and you can never get back to anything. That is the tragedy of the situation.

We are tremendously disciplined on that thrust. Now we have to be disciplined, coming in. This time you do not want the power behind you. The parachutes are out behind you, slowing you down a bit. That is what I mean by the discipline we need --- that parachute. Without it, you burn up coming in, do you not?

At that point, nobody can help you. Your corporate discipline is not going to help you one iota. That is why, when people go around asking, "Should we break up our marriage?" you are not going to take care of them. They are going to take care of themselves for a while, or they are not going to be taken care of. You just try to take care of them if you do not believe me. You are on your own. And I am on my own. The task is forging the discipline to take care of yourself, to enable you to stand strong when nobody could stand strong. That is what you have ahead of you. And there is not a soul in the room who has not breathed the air of what is ahead of us. It is all down inside. It makes me smile these days when somebody comes in to tell me his troubles. He is only rehearsing you, and you do not want to sit there and wallow in the situation the way he is. Finally, all you can say to him is, "Man, take care of yourself."

But what does taking care of yourself mean? In order to answer that, I have to deal with my eccentricities. I do not like to do that very much, but it has dawned on me that those things that I used to consider neurotic patterns and eccentricities, were ways that God was enabling me to take care of myself when I did not realize it.

For instance, I do not permit anybody to get me up in the morning. I would rather be beaten with a horsewhip than have anybody have to wake me in the morning. I am humiliated and angry when I oversleep. I cannot stand it when someone has to come in and wake me up: I get myself out of bed.

I can dress and get myself fairly presentable in fifteen minutes. Therefore, I get up 45 minutes before the time I have decided to appear before creation. I get up 45 minutes early because it takes me that long to recreate my interior environment, to get myself spiritually clothed. Shaving, and showering, putting on my socks; there is not a single thing that is not preparing myself spiritually for the day.

That walk out of my room is one of the most important things. It is life or death for me. I always peek out first, and if I see anybody already up, then I put on a show. You know, I do not do really well on my legs these days, but if I have to, I can do it. I get myself ready and then, they never saw a march.

One of the fine moments in the morning is meeting the security people in the lobby when I walk down that last turn. I slow down a little bit and get myself ready to turn that corner. I am looking my best, and I say, "Good morning," like they will not hear for the rest of the day.

I do not suggest that you do this, but if you are going to take care of yourself, every morning -- not every other morning -- you are going to get yourself spiritually dressed. I am beginning to understand the ontological grounding of spiritual exercises. I am beginning to see that every man does spiritual exercises or he does not breathe at all. If he is going to stand tall, he brings intentionality into them.

The first person to call my attention to the category of experiencing your experience was a teacher of art at the University of Texas years ago. I was shocked when he talked about experiencing your experience. Years later, I saw that it was grinding the spiritual meaning out of every life situation; it was converting matter into spirit. And it was from my meditation on that phrase that I began to see how much of a person's day goes down the drain of his one unrepeatable life because he has not disciplined himself to experience his experience, to stand at attention to life. Look at the millions of happenings that have happened to us since we got up this morning. How many did we embrace? How many did we bring into our beings? Perhaps only five or six.

In Huxley's book, the birds go around crying, "Attention! Attention! Attention!" Then they say, "Here and now, Here and now, Here and now! Attention! Here and now, Here and now, here and now! Attention! Here and now, here and now!" You stand at attention in life. You do not let one of those episodes get by. You begin to wring the profound meaning out of every situation. That is taking care of yourself.

Taking care of yourself has a great deal to do with, not only pre-brooding, but with what I call after-brooding. I think that, nowadays, I am more interested in after-brooding than I am in pre-brooding. For example, I rarely give a talk which seems to me to be anything other than the most colossal failure in the world. But I have learned to trust my feelings. You remember that one of the crucial aspects of charting any paper is to keep one eye on the paper and the other eye on your gizzard. Your emotions are your means of standing at attention. If you are taking care of yourself, it is not just being delighted; you ask yourself why you were delighted.

It works the other way as well. I would not pass anybody in the morning without saying "Good morning," or "Hello." I would not even dream of doing

that. I may do it even though I would not even dream of doing such a thing. The reason is simple: my passing you is my life. It has nothing to do with your life. It is my life standing at attention. I like to look at a people carefully enough to really see them. Very frequently I find them pretty or they look nice, and I say so. But I require of myself not simply to say that they look nice, but to tell them why I think they are looking nice. This has to do with standing at attention from my perspective, but from the other person's perspective, it has to do with after-brooding.

If somebody comes up to me after I have given a lecture that I feel was a failure and says, "Boy, you did a good job," I do not recover from my sense of despair or my sense of not having done a good job. I used to crawl off and lick my wounds. I know better than that now. What I need is what I mean by post-brooding or after-brooding. I gave this very talk a week ago. I felt as if I had one a terrible job, so I went running away. Somebody came by and I asked him, "How did that go?" What was going through his mind was something like, "The old man needs a little comfort," and so he said, "Oh boy, that was good." That was a smart-aleck remark. He just missed the beat. From there I went back up and spent two hours rewriting the thing. I probably will never give it again, but I'm telling you what it means to take care of yourself, or what post-brooding is. I warn you, you let this go by once or twice or three times or four times or 450 times and there is no return. Some of you fall flat on your faces and then you wonder what in the world caused it. It was caused way back there when you let this thing or that or the other go by. And then you find yourself a great big old hunk of shaking palsy and you wonder, "Who out there caused that?"

You take care of yourself. You are going to need crutches. And you cannot take my crutches. You have to build your own crutches: how you get up in the morning and how you maintain yourself through the day. These are not psychological crutches; they are spiritual crutches. From the outside they may look alike but you are not after any buoyancy. You are concerned with ways of paying attention to your life.

One of my crutches is that I cannot stand anybody whispering. I cannot stand people huddling over in a corner, whispering in a corporate situation. I remember one of my colleagues who came whispering to me in a meeting. I just exploded: If you have got something to say, say it out loud. And then live with the consequences of saying it. I don't ask you to take that crutch, but it is one of mine. You forge your own. You are not going to make it without crutches. I would like to talk about space.

You know how you can go around to some of these stations or posts and look in there, just once, and you know the condition of the people? It is not that they were in such a condition that their post or station looks like it does, but because of the way it looks, they were in this condition. You see the difference? If you do not take care of your space, your space will not take care of you. You collapse. Everything goes to pieces and you wonder who caused it. Your space did it. I believe that a great many people in our outfit still do not believe that symbols are what change society. I don't think you really believe that, or you would not allow yourself, day

after day, to be addressed in the way you are by your space. Did you ever go into a house which had a terrible picture hung too high on the wall? Do you not feel it immediately when you meet the people? If you don't take care of yourself, you are not going to make it. Maybe you have not made it now, during these last rigorous months.

I read a report from one of the ITI's recently. The first sentence said, "This was the unclearest and the most chaotic year of our history." To call that stupid would be to give it an honor. This was the year you learned to look at waves and not ripples, when you had more lucidity than you ever had from the moment you began. This year was the time when there was less chaos than ever in our whole history, if you have eyes to behold you may have had something in your eyes. But all you have to do if you do not believe it is to look at the walls in this room just once. What is your space telling you? I do not want to know who wrote that ITI report sentence, but I would like to see his station or his post. I would like to see, for just a minute, his Religious House.

What does it mean to take care of yourself? I go around to these young women in our outfit, and tell them, "Stand up straight." They think I am playing at being their father, but I am not. I am saying, "Take care of yourself." I go around telling these fat people, "Reduce." They think I am trying to be their wife.

What does it mean to take care of yourself? It just occurred to me that one of my crutches is corny humor. I believe that God gave humor in order for people to take care of themselves, even the people who have got the slightest idea of taking care of themselves. This is found in all of the stored-up little hunks of wisdom like, "A person without a sense of humor, who cannot laugh at himself, does not have a chance." That is true. You had better develop the capacity to laugh. I think I remember that even Saint Theresa was a practical joker.

How do you take care of yourself? I believe that if you do anything that is other than enabling you to stand to attention to your immediate situation, you are not talking about what I am talking about. I do not ask you to agree with it, but I want you to understand that I mean that. "Attention! Here and now, here and now, here and now!" That means, "Immediately!" If you are doing something else I think that it is wrong.

Any of you who dared to stand present to the last year were fortunate that the whole thing did not explode inside. You walked very close, and some exploded. And that is fine. You thank God that you did not. You remember the times when one situation or another almost triggered the explosion, and was almost the straw that broke the camel's back. You have become clear about bracketing as a religious exercise. You know how it is when somebody inadvertantly removes one of the brackets without which you could not live, when all of a sudden that bracket gets loose, on top of everything else. I have noticed that at that moment, if something like humming goes on, and nobody presses me for any answer about anything, slowly inside of myself I pick up those things that are loose and get them back in the bracket. Then I am ready to go on again. I would like to hear about music, but it is time to stop.

