

THE CORPORATE EXEMPLARS

We've been talking for the last week and a half now about the World of Hope that has come to our attention. You may remember that we started off with describing what the reality of this World of Hope is that we find ourselves in. Then later on we moved to the New Mood which had to do with the corporate life as a response to the World of Hope. Then we began yesterday with talking about the qualities of the New Style that is present. We talked yesterday about the qualities of living the profoundly human life. This morning we want to talk about exemplars, the group of people who ensure that the people of this world get the chance to live the profoundly human life.

I got a chance to go back to the urban this year. It happened in Philadelphia. I was surprised that it would happen in Philadelphia. Nothing has really changed in the urban. You walk down the street at night finding the same situations of the beggars there, same situations of the discos going. You find the same situations where you look in the eyes of people and just see a blankness. Yet I discovered that everything was transformed. The mood had happened in the urban.

Then I had a chance to go to the country. I'd never been to Mississippi before. I found myself slapping at mosquitoes which made me think I was back in Cano Negro with the mosquitoes and snakes again. It was the experience of walking down the street and having everybody say, "Hi, how y'all doing? Hi, How are you doing?" I discovered that nothing had changed really in the South, that there was still a black world and still a white world. It made me wonder about this World of Hope that we live in. I'm convinced that the World of Hope is not the fact that we are going to have a suburban life style, nor that communities are not going to be broken or fragmented. It is going to have to do with the quality of life that comes out of community, It is going to have to do with bodies of people within the community who have not only decided to give their life in order that maybe one, two, three or four people might see that they've got some creativity to get out. It is going to have to do with deciding to stay in the midst of places which you know are broken, I think that we've all experienced the Human Development project as being symbols of brokenness.

Tioga is not in the first instance a Human Development Project. It was a place where we did a school where all we had was a core of caring people, a core of disciplined people who had come up in the urban style. What we found was that for the staff, Tioga was an assault on our lives. We didn't know. We forgot what it was like to live in the urban. I'm not here to talk about Tioga. I'm not here to talk about the schools, really, but only to say that it's in the midst of discovering the brokenness, in the midst of having a hope or expectation go down the drain time after time again, that one realizes that you are standing in a World of Hope.

This morning we are talking about the exemplar. I think the thing to keep in mind is that we are talking about the corporate exemplar. We've come to call this talk the "hoods of exemplarship."

This talk has to do with the "Hoods of Exemplarhood." It's important to remember we are talking about a spirit vehicle that will freight profound humanness.

There's the hood of the team, or the teamhood. We're talking about guidehood. We're talking about guildhood. We're talking about prophethood. Again, we're talking about roles that we are called to play. I think that the only time that you really discover that you've been called to play these roles is in the midst of difficult humiliation. We discovered what it was like to be a team in the midst of humiliation, when things weren't going right as well as when things were going better than we expected. At any rate, let me talk about these exemplars.

First of all is the exemplar called The Teamhood. In this world what you discover is that you go to a meeting and people ask you to do more than you came prepared to do. You say, "Why did this happen? This isn't what we had planned." It seems that everything you had planned didn't go wrong, didn't go badly. It just went a different way. You discover that you're not in charge. I remember being in Kansas City this last year. Every other day there was a telephone call, "Can you people from the ICA come and do this? Can you people from the ICA come and do that?" Finally just before I was leaving for one of the schools, someone called and said, "We're interested in starting signal communities down here. We've got a bit of funding; we've been fooling around now for a year and want to know if you people will come down and talk to us?" Then you say to yourself, "Wichita is not on our list of things to do this year." And you discover that people are giving you more possibility than what your vision had given you experience. Teamhood begins to emerge when the vision of a group of people exceeds their experience. You don't understand anything anymore. Everything becomes mystery. You experience humiliation. You experience rootlessness and you say in the midst of that, "Why is this happening to us?" Yet, what you discover is that "I guess that we'll do it." Nevertheless, "I guess we'd better go ahead and do it." It's at that point, the nevertheless, that you discover that a team emerges. You learn to trust the wisdom of the group. Now I'm talking about teamhood. I'm not talking about individuals within the team, but how the team gets formed and how the team becomes a corporate body moving through time. It is the foundational basis for which the other exemplars are built. In a team, what happens is you form a covenant. You begin to discern what the direction is, what the mission is that this motley group of people have been called to do. Where you experience that the most in a House is when you are doing battleplanning for the quarter. You forge, try to figure out what the consensus is, what the direction is that we're going to go in. Once you get that consensus made in the battleplanning sessions in a House what you discover is that you can risk all, you can risk all there is. Your values have been held because your insights got into the pot. You discover that if we lose? that loss is not a failure but a learning experience. It is not me losing, but my team, a group of people that have had a learning experience. You discover your selfhood again. The key to a team for me has to do with one, somebody decides to embody the team. Somebody has to decide that they are going to embody the consensus of the group, that they are going to have to embody being the team. Maybe the way that takes form is that somebody decides after every meeting that they are going to clean up and prepare the space for the next day. Another key for the team has to do with when a group of people go through the fire. It's going through the fire of hammering out a consensus. I've always wondered about sororities and fraternities and the whole issue of pledging and initiation. You are called to be a team. You are called to go through the fire. It's on the other side of going through the fire that you discover that you're a part of a winning group..

God calls the team into being, that mystery, Being itself, calls the team into being. Once you have discerned what the direction is for a team, then mystery wins. You win. You and mystery as a team win. When teamhood has come into place what you see is power released. The residue that you see is power released. You see a spirit that says nothing will hold you back. I remember in Tioga the first workday we did. It had taken us a whole week to build the team of the school. It took us about a week to build the team of the faculty. We were commissioned to do this workday. Some people came in and had given us a bit of trouble. We kept saying, "We've decided to go ahead and do this." At first people were afraid to walk down the streets of Tioga--on Ontario Street--for fear of what they saw. Yet time came for that workday after a week of going through the fire, after a week of-- we didn't even have hot water for a couple of weeks, we didn't have a telephone--it just seemed like the first week everything went wrong. It was after a week of just standing. People left saying we had deceived them. They said, "This school is more like a survival camp than it is anything else." This motley group of people who had come and formed a covenant that Sunday night when there were something like 150 people who had come from the community. The next morning you looked around and there were thirty of us. The next morning you looked around and there were twenty of us. Numbers kept dropping. But the twenty people went out. It was something like "can't nothing stop us now, can't nothing stop us now, can't nothing stop us now." We marched down Ontario Street. People came by saying, "You're wrong." We kept painting, kept painting, kept painting. But you see the power was released. People in that week who had never painted, who had never danced before, once they became a part of that team discovered they had gifts to offer to the team. The team has to do with the corporate part of building the consensus. When you've got a team, once you're stated your consensus, the team then demands that the general come forth, that a leader come forth, state the consensus of the group, state the direction, and you give permission to be the leader. When you haven't

built that consensus, when you haven't built that team, trying to get anything done as a leader doesn't work. It just doesn't work. It comes off as somebody shoving something down your throat. At any rate, teamhood has to do with the covenant, the direction, and the consensus of the group.

The second exemplar is the guidehood. The experience of the guide is like one who knows, one who has been there before. What they are going to do is walk down this path with you struggling their own struggle, but encouraging you to go on. The guide has to do with allowing the people to live in the depths of their own existence. In this world, I remember, one of the tactics we had in Tioga was every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night a few of us were assigned to go out and visit some of the social spots in the community to keep our frame going. One Friday night, several of us were coming back home to Bridgeway, one of our residences. It was about 2:00 in the morning as we were walking down the street. We'd danced a lot and had a good time. We had told people what we were doing. We'd done our frame. There was a man lying in the middle of the street. This car turns around the corner on two wheels--it was Friday night and folks were high--the car missed the man by about a foot. The only thing that saved that man was somebody jumped up and pulled him off the street. We dusted the guy off and he fell back down. Then a couple of weeks later, I was walking down the street to get to the school, this woman comes up to me saying, "Do you have twenty-five cents? Can I have a quarter?" I reached in my pocket and started to give her that quarter and then I said to myself: "Hell, no! I won't give her a quarter!" So I started beating her up, "What do you want this quarter for?" "I want some coffee." She went on and on. You know how those conversations go. So we finally brought her into the house, and into the office. She got in and said the coffee was too hot. Then she wanted some bread for her throat was too sore. Then the bread was too hard. I said, "We've got some cheese." The cheese wouldn't go down her throat. She wanted some soup. Nothing would suit her. We called the police. The police came. They laughed and said to kick her out. We finally convinced them to take her to detention--the jails in Philadelphia. They kept her there for 24 hours because the next morning, sure enough, she was there. Everybody in the block knew her. It really got to me.

The suffering of this world will never go away. The ceaselessness out of which the guide is called the suffering of this world will never ever, ever go away. Guidehood happens when your vision goes beyond what you ever dreamed of doing. I remember in 1975 when somebody came in and announced that we were no longer going to do RS-I, We were getting good at marketing RS-I. Instead we were going to do Town Meetings, What is this Town Meeting bit? The vision you have goes beyond what you thought you could do. Someone was talking the other day about what it was like to set up beds on the sixth floor and have somebody come in and say, "It's not human enough. We've got to put some flowers in here and rearrange the beds." You begin to see what they are saying, but resent it, and if you don't do it hope dies. The other thing you see is that you're not going anywhere. I talked about the ceaselessness. Day after day to walk in the urban. Day after day to walk in the rural. You see blank stares, Suffering never goes away. The ceaselessness of it all. Whatever you do is only a tiny drop in the bucket. Your weakness becomes intensified. Your ineffectivity as a group becomes intensified. We know what it's like to be in a project and to have that happen. It's at that moment when you can't make another step saying, "What in the world is this all about? Why? We're not going anywhere." When you see that the suffering is never going to go away and everybody begins to give up, that is the point where guidehood emerges. Someone was saying that our experience of late has been that everybody has stepped aside and nobody wants to be a leader. We've been teasing about these front rows. Nobody wants to come up here to the front row. "Let them do it. Let them do it."

How many of us have not experienced that? It seems that I can't take it--weakness intensified, Something has got to change. This is the point of the guide emerging. Something's got to change in there. You get tricked. You get tricked into being the leader. You get tricked into being the guide. What you discover is that you've been here before. You've been there. In the community, in the consult, you tell people that they are going to experience the dark night. You are going to experience people not wanting to help you. They're going to sit on porches and wave to you, "Good-bye, good-bye! Have fun out there. This is a good project y'all are doing." You tell people that and they come back to you a week later and they say, "That happened," Yes. "But I don't want to a part of that." The guide has the responsibility of allowing people today to live, to create a resolve that has to do with "over my dead body, over my dead body." The way you do this is as the guides we walk with the village, we walk with the communities of

this world. We walk the agony, the ecstasy that it is in creating primal community. We allow them to walk their own journey, creating primal community. When that happens, it is like spirit renewed within a group. It is like a spark ignites. Every bit of creativity comes a part of a ripple that becomes a big wave into the future. People see that they've got something to offer again. Maybe guidehood looks something like us guiding each other in the collegium dynamic in our Houses.

The other exemplar has to do with that of the guild. In the school you are creating community, primal community. You get the team which is the basis of doing that. Somebody in the team decides to play the role of the guide. Somebody decides to play the role of the guild. The guild has to do with when you discover that you have, for the nth time created out of nothingness. All of a sudden you're walking on the road and the whole world lights up for you.. You see what life is all about. I remember being in India. We'd just visited Mother Teresa's orphanage. Then we'd gone to the House of the Dying. Everyone was lying around dying. There was this one guy dressed in orange and he sat up and he was just laughing his head off. I couldn't figure out what was so funny. All the Americans were passing out. He was just laughing his head off in the House of the Dying. I remember walking out of there. For the first time the tragedy of the world came crashing through. Not only are there people who are starving in this world, but the fact is that because they are concerned with getting their next piece of food there is no way for them to get their creativity into history, There are thousands like that. There are millions like that who have no way to get their humanness into history. It's at this point when you see that in your cities, in your villages-- wherever you go--that .the tragedy of life is that folks are not getting their being into history and you get angry and say, "Why do this? Why go on?" and everything you hear back is "Go ahead and do it" or "Because I said so." It's at this point that the guild comes into being.

By the guild I mean the group that acts out its belief. You know in the Fifth City Pre-school, I can remember the times that Ruth and others were doing things because the ICA was there. They were teaching there but the pre-school had not yet become theirs. Ruth came over to the Academy this past Spring and started talking about the drama of humanness ritual and all the rituals that the pre-school goes through, both the faculty and the kids before they start the day, just to get them into the day. You began to see that Ruth had become a living witness, had become what she believed in. Life is the city. The city is broken, scattered, burnt pieces. We can live this day or throw it away. Ruth had become that very embodiment. Not only Ruth, but that core of teachers. We can live this day or throw it away. Someone said that maybe the guild is akin to the saint. What you do in the guild is you act out, start acting out what you believe in.

In the schools we were doing Town Meetings. This is the big event of the school. You do the whole school to get people to the point where they go out and do a Town Meeting. Why? Because they do it on behalf of, and secondly, they discover they have really laid their lives down. In Pace we did this. In every school, people complain about singing. They don't like to sing. But they find that on the way to the Town Meeting that they can't stop singing. They get to the Town Meeting and do it, then come home happy as punch.. It changes the whole school. Every single school has been like that. After the Town Meeting, every single person has been transformed. They have laid their lives down. They told communities the new human lecture. We are living in a NEW WORLD and you, if you have courage, can begin to realize the dream that you have. They began to believe that they can realize the dream. We did an evaluation In Pace and what we say in the New Human lecture is really true. When you see the guild becoming a reality, vocation is no longer the question. They have laid their lives down. What you discover is that you will work with anyone in the guild. There are some interesting people to work with in this world. You discover that what's important is first the discipline that has to do with the sustaining symbols or the symbolic life. It has to do with study. It has to do with justing love. Then you become the guild when you start believing, start acting out what you have proclaimed that you are about. History gets changed. If we were to take the civil rights era in this country, maybe that's what happened. People started becoming the guilds. There is a saying, "When life is trodden to naught, trodden to naught, then life is everything."

Maybe this thing we're talking about with new polity, with new economic, our decision to be on stipend is the very embodiment of the fact that the New Social Vehicle is coming into being. Again the emphasis is on guildhood.

And then the prophet. The prophet is maybe akin to the poet. When you see prophethood going on what you see is the poet. The prophet states the practical vision of a people. You all remember the "I have a dream" speech. Everybody has a dream. What happened was that King filled that speech with meaning. "I have a dream that one day my kids will sit by all other kinds of kids, that education will be no problem across this world." People began to believe that. People began to believe that dream. That dream has to do with people around this world getting their gifts into history. When you see prophethood going on, prophethood makes you stand tall. We used to see in a lecture back then that this is the point where you presence love. If the guild has to do with justing love, if the guide has to do with witnessing love, if the team has to do with feeling phony maybe, the prophet has to do with presencing love. You are dead already. You've died. You've been crucified before the crucifixion. You are no longer your own man. What you see is that the solitariness, the suffering never goes away. You know that your suffering becomes intensified. Your unfulfillment becomes intensified. Yet nevertheless you can't stop it. Maybe what happens in prophethood is that you begin to kiss the lepers. You reject everything in this world. Your only concern has to do with loving the mystery's cause. When you see prophethood going on what you see is that Being peeping through you. You don't really care about yourself. You see that Being is speaking through you. You're speaking the radical indicative of the times. You leave people with a new context. The people of this world, that local people, are going to rise again. Sure enough local people have risen again.

I got to thinking, we used to say somewhere that there were three spheres - the western sphere, the eastern sphere, and the southern sphere. We said then that the southern sphere is the key to the east and the west. Then we said that NAME was the key to the whole thing. Now we're living within that prophecy. Being becomes your mouthpiece. It's not me up here saying this. Something is speaking through me. Yet, when you prophesy what you see is that people make a decision. Yes, local people are on the rise. This is what it looks like to have a new community. Everything is new. Nothing has changed in local communities but everything is new. You have new eyes to see what's going on in communities. The prophet.

In these exemplars we are called to be those who act. WE are called to be those who presence love. We are called to be those who witness to allow people to live a depth commitment. We are called to be those who take the critical mass and get them to state a consensus, a direction.. It is not us. What I'm trying to say is that exemplarhood does not come about because we decide it. It is not an idea. It is a role we are called to play at any one point. It's not that we stand up and say that we are going to be an exemplar today-. It hasn't happened to me like that. You are humiliated into being an exemplar. You are humiliated into being a prophet.. I don't want to say these words about what the world is going to look like. Yet, I can't help it.

I've got a story to illustrate this. You may remember the book: Report to Greco.

"Samuel ""

The hoary prophet with his leather girdle and patchwork tatters was gazing down at the city; he did not hear the Lord's cry. The sun stood a spar's length above the horizon. Sinful Gilgal was buzzing far below wedged between the red rocks of Carmel with its sword-straight palms and thorny, fully ripened wild figs.

"Samuel! You have grown old, Samuel, my faithful servant. Can't you hear me?"

Samuel quivered. His thick eyebrows blended in wrath, his long forked beard blustered violently, his ears echoed like conches. The malediction whinnied in his entrails like an unbridled mare.

"My curse," he bellowed, extending his emaciated arm over the city which was laughing, singing, buzzing like a wasp's nest. "My curse upon all who laugh, upon the unlawful sacrifices which blur the face of heaven, upon the woman who beats her clogs against the cobblestones."

"Lord, Lord, have the thunderbolts in your palm of bronze been extinguished?"

You blew-the sacred malady down upon the holy body of our king and he falls to the ground foaming like a snail, puffing like a turtle. Why? Why?

What did he do to you? I ask you - answer me: Loose a pestilence then, on all men if you are just; pluck men's sperm out of their loins and squash it against the stones!"

"Samuel! Be quiet, Samuel, and listen to my voices."

The prophet's body began to tremble. And as he leaned for support against the bloody rock where the Almighty's victims were slaughtered, he heard all three of God's cries together. Lifting his arms high he called, "I am here, Lord."

"Samuel, fill your pitcher with prophetic oil and go to Bethlehem."

"But Bethlehem is far away. A century's beating against the earth in your service has made my feet turn to rot. Mount someone else, Lord; I am no longer able."

"I'm not speaking to the flesh. That I detest and do not touch. I am speaking to Samuel!"

"Speak, Lord, I am here."

"Samuel, fill your pitcher with prophetic oil and go to Bethlehem. Without opening your mouth? without allowing anyone to accompany you, knock on Jesse's door."

"I have never been to Bethlehem. How shall I know which is Jesse's door?"

"I have marked it with a fingerprint made of blood. Knock on Jesse's door. Of his seven sons, choose one."

"Which one, Lord? My eyes have grown dim; I cannot see well."

"The moment you face him, your heart will bellow like a calf. That is the one you should choose. Push apart his hair, find the very top of his head and anoint him King of Israel.... I have spoken!"

"But Saul will find out. On my return he'll lay a trap for me--and kill me."

"What do I care? I have never valued the lives of my servants. Be gone."

"No, I refuse."

"Wipe the sweat from your face Samuel. Steady your jaws so they stop rattling, and speak to me, to the Lord. You are gibbering, Samuel. Speak clearly!"

"I am not gibbering. I said, I refuse to go."

"Speak more softly. You are screaming as though from fear. Why do you refuse to go? I trust Samuel will condescend to answer me. Are you afraid?"

"No, I am not afraid. Love keeps me from going. It was I who anointed Saul King of Israel. I loved him more than my own sons. I blew my soul between his pale lips; it was the spirit of prophecy, my spirit, that made him illustrious. He is my body and soul; I will not betray him."

"Why do you fall silent? Is Samuel's heart emptied so soon?"

"Lord, you are almighty. Do not play with me. Kill me! You have no other choice - kill me." Samuel's eyes filled with blood. Clutching the rock, he waited.

"Kill me! Kill me."

"Samuel"

But the hoary prophet grew wilder and wilder.

"Kill me! Kill me! You have no other choice."

No answer. Midday passed; the sun declined. A swarthy barefooted boy appeared. He ascended the path and approached the prophet in terror, as though nearing the edge of a cliff. Placing the prophet's meal of dates, honey, bread and a crock of water at the base of the rock, he left hastily with bated breath, descended to the city, and slipped into his family's mean cottage. His mother leaned over and hugged him.

"Still?" she asked, her voice trembling. "Still?"

"Yes, " replied the boy. "Still battling with the Lord."

Well, the exemplars. Again, it is not a decision that you in the first instance decide. It has to do with being chosen. It has to do with when you're at the point of humiliation, at the point of weakness, at the point where nothing makes sense anymore, that you are called to play a role. That role may be the face of the guide. That role may be the face of discipline-- that is the guild. That role may be the face of the prophet. It seems to me that - somebody talked the other day about our deciding to proclaim who we really are - to go ahead and get it said that what we are about is renewing the lives of communities. That we are indeed the new religious.