

**THIS IS THE YEAR**

The Panchayat at the end of the Global Order Council really gave us a gift when they presented us the one priority for the year with three polar tensions. And I think that the poetry with which they stated them has allowed us to stand not in the very particular of this year but in the meaning of this year. The fact that we've worked in task forces named, "Articulating Historical Task", "Shaping Disciplined Life" and "Embodying Future Presence" has been the gift of that kind of work on our behalf. The work of this council has taken that poetry and really plumbed its depths and brought it into living form. I think that the Future Presence group really allowed us to stand in the middle of that new as we worked in the particularities of each of the poles. Now, we know that we have resolved to live out this year in that one priority. I'd like to just give a few reflections on "This is the Year".

This is the year in which we'll stand in the 16-year perspective. We'll be looking into our past and toward our future. Last year we worked in holons. I don't know how many holons we had, but there were a lot of them and we came up with a list of resolves so long you couldn't remember them. It seems that this year we really have done the hologram. This is the holographic year. We named last year, "Embodying the New Paradigm" -- but this year we have really been able to stand in that perspective. I thought ES-I was a sleeper last year, because it freighted the new imagery of the new paradigm. It had those shifts that were a part of the paradigm -- like authority to authenticity. One of them was the hologram. It was also the kind of feel you get when somebody says "blue" and you think "giraffe". It's that kind of time we're living in. We're doing this council in the middle of the transition of all of history into the new.

This is the year to stand in that 16-year perspective. We're putting a capstone on social development. Last year I went up in the St. Louis Arch and heard the story about how it was created and the great victory of putting in the final capstone. That's what this year is about. The doing we have been doing in social demonstration we will not be doing in the same way after this year. I was really surprised at how I related to my colleagues from Kenya this year at the council. Last year, one of our colleagues came to Houston for the Annual Appeal fresh from Kenya. I was in awe at his stories -carrying mattresses from village to village to sleep on -- it was just fantastic, but I had a hard time relating to it. But this year, I was aware that the experiences people had in Kenya, I had in North America. When they talked about the Village Leaders' Conference and the kind of exchange that went on there, I felt like they were talking about the Rural Development Symposiums. Something is happening in the pulling together of that which we are about around this globe. That is a part of putting the capstone on social demonstration.

It is also part of what we see in the image of Gandhi touring the realm before he went about his new strategy. Perhaps there is a bit of that in this year, for this is the year in which we will live out the classical historical change model of standing outside of history and creating the models to inject into it that will change the situation. I often wonder what it took to create the models and the structures that we live out of now. I have a hard time imagining how the social process triangle ever got squeezed into the time design, or where all these financial models (that we are already changing dramatically) came from. What it really took to do that is what we have decided to be about in this year. It's something that we have to intentionally decide to do. I recently heard the story about how there came to be a quotation in the Global Order Report. Part of our ritual is to read it when we do the Global Order Report. It seems that one day two of our colleagues who were doing the Global Order Report as part of their assignment noticed that there was this leftover space. The two of them decided to plump a quotation in there to fill up the space. Now that's one way to get new structures launched, but perhaps we will have a balance to that sort of practical accident in this kind of year we are going to have. This is a year in which we'll be building confidence in our place to stand for the next sixteen years. We will be creating our basic understandings and our basic tools for that leaf into the future.

This is a year in which we're going to take a pilgrimage. I'm not talking about the one we're going to do in December of '84. I mean the pilgrimage to Chicago. We've talked about this place already as the temple. We will take a pilgrimage to the council in one sense. Perhaps you might call this a pilgrimage to the roots of our past and the seeds of our future. Did you read that little thing about pilgrimages? It's really a great context. First of all, you have hazardous travel. Well, here we are. We are being sent out to the land of "Shaping Disciplined Life through Corporate Finances". We're headed right out the door to that land. Here are some phrases about what we're going

to find out there: "unknown ways and dangers along the way", "interior turmoil", "leaving behind familiar and secure patterns". All that is required to symbolize the radical break necessary to go the distance to the center.

And then during the year we are going to continue on our journey, our pilgrimage. We are going to have companions with us on the way. We're going to have the friendship of the League. And we're going to be tempted to linger along the way, to hold great conversations, and to talk about the obstacles we've overcome. In fact, I imagine that we'll probably want to linger a lot at the shrine of the IERD when it comes time for that. We sure did want to linger in Memphis at "Success Southern Style". Our folks that worked to facilitate that week couldn't be brought down from wherever it was they were to do our area check-signals meeting. In fact, we even spent one day riding in canoes. This was at the time we had the great paper on the ritual of reconstruction, and canoes were the closest we could come to the "portage" imagery, so we rented a few canoes and all went out canoeing that weekend. That is the kind of year we are going to be having -- a year of pilgrimage.

And then the next phase of the pilgrimage involves the marks of humiliation and sacrifice which go with the symbolic act of arriving and deciding to do that which ritualizes the act of social repentance. I guess the questions for us will be: "Are we ready for that kind of radicality?", "What will it require?" I think of the context we heard again this week from Kazantzakis, "Burn your houses. Leave your wives." When I got clear what was meant, I could-understand it. Burn that which supports you. Leave that which keeps you from standing before the Mystery. That is a different context that I have had on that before. If we take that advice seriously, what will be the gift that we bring to the occasion of the Council? What will be the promise that we have for our time together?

The next stage of the pilgrimage is the return, by a different road, and a demonstration of change. Someone suggested that one of the gifts that we might bring to that occasion is all of the religious house plaques. We might put them all up on one wall. We might take them back to the same places, but we might not.

But perhaps, more importantly I think, is that this is the year in which we are going to be examining our religious calling. We're going to be doing this with the stuff of our lives. We're going to be doing this through each of the poles of our year's priority. We're going to be looking at ourselves as religious strategists. One of the things that Gandhi has reminded us of is that it is out of the context of the religious that we decide that which we are about in the world. This is what one of our colleague's passion for this Rainbow Coalition is about. How do we get a hold of what he sees there? I remember some imagery of one strategy in North America last year: what would it mean to put a wedge into society at the focal points so that when it breaks apart it is like a diamond -- that it is a demonstration that affects the social pain and social consciousness of this continent and of the globe.

This is a year in which we will be looking at where -- where is the suffering? -- but also at what -- what is the suffering? Somebody mentioned the statistics of the suicide rate in Europe, and how, even when you contrast that for example with the deaths on the streets of Calcutta, you get a sense of another kind of suffering. It's like what Mother Theresa talked about as the poverty of North America when she accepted the Nobel Prize. How does our strategy be a religious act? Someone was reporting a conversation with Nathan Grey who was at the Maine Rural Development Symposium where he talked about his involvement with a leadership conference that was held in Arkansas as an opportunity to do a kind of symbolic religious act that allowed people to clarify their values and to raise ethical questions. It seems that the IERD is that kind of a strategy for us, the way we talk about it as the funeral of the top-down approach or getting the local voice on stage. And that is happening across these lands, across Canada and the United States. We know this.

And we know what it takes to get something to happen in history with this kind of profundity. We know that it requires your very life. It's not just something you can sit around and think about, or that will happen if you have a new level of consciousness. It's not something that doesn't change you. And the question is, "How do we talk about that which is beyond, making a difference with your life?"

My father is an anthropologist and a missionary, so he thinks he knows a lot about the world. From his academic perspective, he is quite cynical about how we could possibly do what we say we will do. I'm constantly trying to find the poetry to talk about that which is inside that decision to put your life totally into the stuff of life. This decision is different from a social agency decision. I look forward to the kind of dialogues this year, as we are on this pilgrimage, that will help me articulate that for myself and for those colleagues that are being called into the new age along with us. I think that we will be examining our religious role in this new society.

We already have images about roles. We are talking about the priesting role that is a part of the new. We ground it in images like Roundtable. People like to sing, and sing songs of praise. You don't have any other opportunity to sing these songs. Where else could you go to sing "A New Society Rising"? People want to sing that way because it is what they experience in their lives. They experience the new leap of consciousness that is happening in this world and they need a place and a way to talk about that. One of our roles, obviously, is-allowing people to pull the meaning out of their own lives. The Vocational Journey Lab is one of the ways that we do that. Another is our own methodologies of reflection that allow us to pull the meaning out of every situation. And it is important this year for us to use this kind of look at ourselves as a way of reflecting on what is the hook into the future that is the human development zone?

We are going to be looking at ourselves and examining our religious callings as individuals during this year. I appreciated the caution against detaching the work of this year from our own very particular vocational decisions. That House Church celebration the other night was really fine. It was a long one but it was great that we took the opportunity to symbolize peoples' decisions. I know that you were like I was, sitting there thinking about your own first coming into the Order. For me it will be nine years ago next month. I thought about the fact that the first really hard decision was concerning my two pre-school age children; I had to put them in pre-school structures which changed my image of myself as a mother radically. And yet, sitting right back there was my daughter, coming into the Student House by her own decision. It just gave me a sense of how amazing life is. It doesn't seem like such a long time ago, but, my God, that is nine years. We are pouring our lives into this and we need to take the time to mark the journey we are on and its significance. In fact, we are pouring out our deaths. We are a fantastic community.

Every individual this year will have to wrestle with God, like Jacob wrestling with the angel. Earlier this week I had an experience where I thought, "I feel just like the character in the Ronin who kept getting beaten over the head." I know this sounds extreme, but it was a terrible day in my life. I had nearly collapsed by the end of the day, but I thought, "This is going to make me stronger. I know it is. I am learning from this experience." I was thinking then about doing this talk, also. But that was wrestling with God. And that is what we all must do in articulating for ourselves that relationship to the Unsynonymous and making the very most personal decision about the future over and over again. We must allow ourselves the opportunity and the way of symbolizing that wrestling within this body during this year.

And, what will be required for us to live in this Year of the Order Council? It will require courage. Now I am basically a coward. My colleagues are always working on me not to be such a coward. I mean all the time. I have many moments where I almost feel that there are wolves about to devour me. When we were working on this money stuff, I went between dread and fascination all the time. It's like building a house of cards -- a little bit of order funds up here and a little bit of self-support over here. And you feel like you know this isn't real. We are building our year out of this. . . but it is real. The members of the National Steering Committee -- people who never knew us before, who have never walked in this place before the last meeting -- they wrote out checks! It is real.

Courage is a decision to believe. And then courage comes. I look at that IERD timeline and I don't understand how we are going to do it all. When you first see those Project Description Labs, all that documentation; you think it will be boring. But then you really start thinking about it, and you think about the people you've met in the projects and you know that it is not about documentation at all. It is about changing people's lives. It isn't any different than what we are going to send this LENS International team out to do for twenty-five thousand dollars. We are about changing people's lives in every one of those situations.

Then there is that other polarity, the Order Council Mechanisms. When I think about building a consensus across this body, my cowardice really shines forth. It seems as if there are a lot of people with a lot of different perspectives being brought to this situation. I don't see how it is all going to come together. And yet, on the other hand, that which we have resolved, we know we have the interior resources to do if we decide.

Now I haven't a clue about how people understand what it takes to do consensus. And a lot of people you wouldn't realize would understand it are understanding it. This is about what it takes to do a strategy of human "The challenge today: in developing a strategy, a variety of voices and conflicting views, each with a legitimate concern, most with a possible solution, make it difficult to reconcile realistic alternatives and make hard policy

decisions. This is the blessing and the burden of direct and extensive citizen participation in the strategy process. It makes the policy better, not easier."

Now this is what for me courage is about -- a decision. It is really just a decision to go through the transformation that this year is. It is a decision to place our very lives on the altar. It is a decision to place our various axes and our illusions about life on the altar in order to create the new future corporately.

This year will require us to live in the gap. In fact, this year, we are in a gap. It's the gap of the whole transition age -- things just don't work. Models have all fallen apart and the old patterns we are used to living out of are gone. That is as true of us internally as it is of those around us. There is just no place to which you can turn. Life today is a creation; it's a living in the gap that requires us to be the spirit people that we are. We are called to work on developing the spirit themes that are already alive among us: social repentance, reconciliation, adoration. These themes aren't here yet, and we must live in the gap of the articulation of those for us. It is like a kind of vulnerability. In one of Castenada's books he used the image of vulnerability, of your spirit sort of disintegrating. It's like not quite being there yet. And, what are the cautions of pushing through the depths as we develop and articulate for ourselves the spirit themes for the next sixteen years?

Now another way we're going to be living in the gap, it seems to me, is in terms of exemplars. This will be a year in which we will find for ourselves a way to hold up exemplars for the eighties and the nineties and the next century. What is the style that we need to stand before and emulate? What style holds the values for the future that are being articulated?

This year will require that we turn spirit into matter and matter into spirit. For a long time we have had the theme of taking care of yourself. My son's bedtime ritual is: "I can take care of myself so I'm ready to care for the world." I've been doing a lot of thinking on this taking care of yourself this year because I often feel that I put taking care of myself as a high priority. I've been trying to look for the new language that will point to the cruciform life, where your stance is taking care of the world rather than taking care of yourself as being that which you are about. I feel like this is going to be a year when our anxieties are high. It's like somebody's launching a space shuttle. How is it that we make the decision to be those who take care of the world? It means turning spirit into matter. The way in which we've talked about it is, "Kindling the life quality where it was not." In our religious houses, in every place that we are, what will it be for us this year to make a decision that in the ambiguity and the press of the year, that in this moment, in this particular situation, the life quality will be kindled where it was not? I recently read a book called, *The Color Purple*. It's a great novel. One of the lines is: "I think God is pissed off if you walk by purple in a field and don't notice it." This year that is my line about kindling the life quality, seeing through the moment to that which is the eternal.

Now this is all a question of story. We know that. It is how you decide to take a relationship to your relationship. I was really caught by the last couple of phrases in the Flashdance song: "Take your passion, know what you're crying for; Make it happen, make it worth dying for." That's the story of this year for me.

The Panchayat in their talk spoke of God's economy, that this year will be seen to come from the indicative stuff, that it isn't so much a matter of creating as a matter of revealing to ourselves that which is and that which we are. I would claim the promise that God's economy will in fact be revealed this year. And I'd like to do that by reading from a speech by Ira Progoff called, "The Next Steps in Religion":

"We need to do a repositioning. We are in a midpoint in time. The past is accumulating; the future is not yet. If we continue in the way of the past, there will not be a new kind of future. But if we so position ourselves in respect to the past that we become a kind of transformers for the movement that is going through the past, so that the movement of life goes through, and as it emerges from us it will be different than it was when it entered us. Like a prism with the sunlight coming through, it changes as it moves through. The kind of repositioning that involves getting a sense of how it has been in the past and asking where are you trying to go, where are you trying to move and positioning ourselves in a way that the past can speak to us, through us as it moves. In that sense it really will be that the next step of religion and the next step for our civilization as a whole is not something that we can work out in our minds as a conscious and intellectual thing that we are in favor of and then speak for, but the next step can only be something that comes into being for having passed through us and having formed itself by moving through individuals and groups and gradually establishing itself."