

“A Presence that Disturbs”-Anthony Gittins

Points noted in chapter 4 on Community:

- There can be no authentic Christianity, no life-giving Christianity, no Christianity worth living and dying for without a daily taking up of the Cross and following in the Golgotha-bound footstep of the one who lived and died for us. (1 Cor 1:23-24)
- “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works as I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these.” (Last Supper discourse-John 14)
- The Christian community is indeed and explicitly intended to be a corporate body, widely differentiated internally but with one head-Jesus Christ—and a unity of purpose. (1 Cor 12:12-30; Eph 4:3-13; Gal 3:26-28)
- Solidarity can be *mechanical* or *organic*. Mechanical can be identified in terms of a school of fish or a colony of termites—common purpose but no individuality.
- Organic solidarity is manifested by a group of people acting in unison; and though each person has a different responsibility, the outcome of the whole group depends on the commitment of each individual.
- Founders of Orders or communities specifically dedicated to a mission are driven by the original act of Creation over chaos. The image of unharnessed, boundless, elemental energy causes on Ignition of a Pentecostal moment eventually leads to the formation of community.
- The spark or ignition is needed to begin when the founder transmits their dream to a handful of companions.
- The moment seems brief, but its formative value, its effect on the small company and on an unsuspecting world, is immeasurable. The moment is characterized not only by its brevity but equally by its intensity and daring: the dream *must be* impossible, the companions must be *insufficient*, and the audacity or *faith* must be total. The common factors are outrageous imagination, insuperable odds, little practical likelihood of success (and thus high statistical probability of failure), and burning commitment both to the idea and to the community.
- This brief moment of incandescent energy generates what can be called “*communitas*”. It is *not* a community in the usual sense. In fact, a small group of this kind, united in trust and committed to a Gospel ideal, fired by God’s Spirit and launched on the adventure of a lifetime, is definitely not to be confused with a conventional community.
- The power of *communitas* is fragile. It is not the power of the self-important. The power of *communitas* is to be found, paradoxically, in its vulnerability and modesty. The small group of people committed to undertaking a seemingly impossible task is touched not by *hubris* but by *humility*: the rootedness and groundedness of those who know their own very limited abilities, yet have *abiding trust and enduring faith in the God of miracles*. *Communitas*-power is not full of itself but is filled with nothing less than the power of God working through *human instrumentality*.
- *Communitas* generates a great deal of energy, because *communitas* is rooted in hope, united around a common vision, maintained by trust and inspired by great generosity. For a brief moment, a group experiencing *communitas* is both tireless and scheduleless. It is utopian, idealistic, and risk-taking. Just as a flame struck from a flint surges, steadies and slowly subsides, so does the incandescent power of *communitas* begin to abate even as its flame becomes visible.
- Difference between *Communitas* and Community:
 - *Communitas* carries people through moments of drama and high energy, risk and unpredictability; community sustains people for the long haul.
 - *Communitas* produces the energy for takeoff; community sustains level flight.

- Communitas produces dreams and visions; community maintains works and programs that keep the dream alive and creates strategies that serve the vision.
- Communitas is ignited by a small group and is radical and path-breaking; community is maintained by large numbers and is conservative and routine.
- Both are necessary for long-term undertakings.
- Unless, however, the spark of communitas can be struck again and again from the flint of community, the momentum of a group will slow. The group will run out of ideas, its creativity will evaporate, and ultimately boredom and disinterest will replace inspiration and fire.