

Jubilee Renewal Gathering, Tirley Garth

November 1995

Dear Friends,

The experience of Jubilee Renewal given to fifty of us from 18 countries at Tirley Garth in late October can be likened to the proverbial elephant: indescribable but unmistakable. Difficult though it is to put into words the spirit we experienced, it went deep. We would like to try to give whatever glimpses we can - largely through the words written by some of those who lived through those days together, and some quotes from speakers and other spiritual resources, on the sheets attached.

We felt gratitude for, and united in spirit with, so many other friends around the world meeting simultaneously in small or larger groups to focus on God in spiritual preparation for Caux's 50th anniversary next year and for the tasks awaiting MRA in the years ahead. This focus not on problems but on the mystery of God's unfailing love brought great evidence of the power of waiting on God together. Somehow it enabled us to be fully ourselves - open and vulnerable - many remarking on an unusual sense of freedom with one another.

Tirley Garth was a bountiful setting for the gathering. The natural beauty of the house and gardens, magnified by days of glistening early-winter sunshine, fostered awareness of God's presence. A noble band of saints from different parts of Britain took all the practical work off us, a gift of love allowing extra space for quiet, prayer and unpressured time with one another.

For some of us Tirley offered - by its reminder of a life-committing decision first made there - a chance to rededicate our all to God. For others Tirley brought to mind painful memories of hurts inflicted or received, which could be released into the forgiving ocean of God's mercy. For all of us it was a refreshment of heart and mind, and an opportunity to deepen bonds of friendship and trust.

The flow of the week was inspired. Each day brought its own distinctive gift. Ailsa Hamilton led us through a personal 'spiritual history of MRA'. On the following days we 'sat at the feet' of Ajahn Sumedho, a Buddhist teacher, and listened to John Lester's challenging reflections about MRA's calling and the need for rejuvenation individually and collectively.

At the generous invitation of Brian and Juliet Boobbyer we journeyed - a kind of pilgrimage - to Holy Island in Northumbria. The lives of the seventh century saints, Aidan and Cuthbert, who established Lindisfarne as an internationally known monastic centre, nourished and inspired us - as did the hours spent with David Adam, vicar of Holy Island.

Rajmohan Gandhi offered us the thought that 'the miracle God wants to give us [might be] to end the grip that history seems to have on the future.'

Each day had space for quiet and for discussion. Meeting for half an hour's prayer each morning and each evening we had a sense that our prayers for renewal were being answered mysteriously even as we prayed. An introduction to the theme of the day was followed by an hour for further reflection with a period of silence in the house. Small groups enabled all of us to share our thoughts and questions. An open discussion was held in the afternoon. One afternoon we were treated to a glorious concert of vocal and instrumental music by Jonathan and Elizabeth Sparey, and Sylvie Söderlund.

Our days were marked by honesty, questing, tears and laughter, and the liberation of having burdens lifted.

We sensed that these days of Jubilee Renewal around the world are a pivotal moment in MRA's history. Our world, desperate for answers, is increasingly looking to communities of faith for signals of hope. For some of us who are already carrying considerable practical and strategic responsibility, it was a moment of decision also to take on full responsibility for the spiritual heart of MRA. At Tirley we felt a fresh certainty, confidence and peace that God is preparing us as a community - in ways perhaps still unknown to us - for 'radical availability' as an instrument for hope and healing in the next century.

With gratitude, love and expectancy,

ROB CORCORAN JOAN HOLLAND MONA MARZOUK
EDWARD PETERS VIJAYALAKSHMI SUBRAHMANYAN
(on behalf of the Steering Committee)

Those attending the Jubilee Renewal Gathering at Tirley Garth: Karlene Archer, Brian and Juliet Boobbyer, Mike Brown, Annejet Campbell, Jenny Carpenter, Alan Channer, Frédéric and Nathalie Chavanne, Rob and Susan Corcoran, Jacqui Daukes, Eva Duckert, Martin Eckart Fuchs, Durdica Fuckan, Rajmohan Gandhi, Christiane Garin, Ailsa Hamilton, Bryan Hamlin, Joan Holland, Meryl Horn, Geraldine Hughes, Idrees and Lorraine Khan, Sturla Johnson, Philippe Lasserre, Mike and Karen Lowe, Mona Marzouk, Bukiwe Maseko, Bob Normington, Isaack Otieno, Bob Painter, Edward and Elisabeth Peters, Jean Piguet, Peter Riddell, Dick Ruffin, Anton Skulberg, Pierre Spoerri, Marianne Spreng, Vijayalakshmi Subrahmanyam, Antero Tikkanen, Graham and Jean Turner, Robo Ukoko-Orogun, Laurie and Elsa Vogel, Cricket White, Jim Wigan

Some quotes and resources from the Jubilee Renewal Week

Perhaps as we stretch out and make our own mistakes we will comprehend more easily the mistakes of the past, learn the lessons more deeply, understand God's gifts then and now more clearly, love each other more wisely, and make some wonderful new discoveries of our own. *Ailsa Hamilton*

To detach oneself from one's life work is beyond human strength. You cannot create without enthusiasm. But in creating something man runs his greatest danger. His work becomes the centre of his world. It puts him in a state of radical unavailability. It takes a break-in of God to deal with it. The depth of a man lies in his power of reception. *Paraphrase of St Francis of Assisi, from a biography of him*

We don't experience life in the future, or in the past, only in the here and now. *Ajahn Sumedho*

Joy is when there is no self. ... Love is not liking but accepting things as they are. *Ajahn Sumedho*

The future is one of love and care. Without it nothing will happen. With it we will always be at the heart of world action and have a winning hand. *Ajahn Sumedho*

The experience of rebirth ... is something which is given through abandonment. It is a relinquishing of self into the hands of God, in which the result is unknown. ... Rebirth involves not minding what God will do. It means leaving behind, leaving outside, not only the bad but also the good, and even the best. God may give it back; but He may not: He may give something else instead. *John Lester*

The leadership of obedience. *John Lester*

You can't take God to people, He is in them already. That demands respect. *David Adam*

God is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be enjoyed. *David Adam*

Whenever I pray, I influence the world. *David Adam*

If we're not deeply involved in things we cannot be visionaries. *David Adam*

The world is not necessarily getting better and better each day, but each day I find some genuine reason for faith, and so the core of faith seems to survive the blasting at times of hopes and plans. *Rajmohan Gandhi*

I think what I feel most of all for myself is the need for an ability to let God's light shine a bit longer on these reactions of mine, and to give them to God and to face them, not linger with them for ever and ever, so God can deal with them, and so that they become part of my spiritual richness instead of something sharp and hard in me that hurts others. *Rajmohan Gandhi*

Books do not contain the cure of the hearts;
Hearts are cured by the company of the Lord of the hearts. *Sufi couplet*

If we are not building bridges we will have to build walls. Strong bridges need strong foundations on both sides. *Jean Piguat*