

## Comm-Unity Building

Psalm 133:1-3 – Behold, how good and pleasant it is  
when brothers dwell in unity!  
It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
running down upon the beard,  
upon the beard of Aaron,  
running down on the collar of his robes!  
It is like the dew of Hermon,  
which falls on the mountains of Zion!  
For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,  
life for evermore.

### I. The need for Unity and Community

#### A. Individual Level

Sense of alienation, animosity, loneliness, depression (suicide), confusion...

#### B. Familial, Social Level

Family breakdown, abuse in male/female relationships, abuse of children, rape, chaos in classrooms and schools, low productivity in industry...

#### C. International Level

Conflict, wars, strife between factions and nations, threat of nuclear war; nations apparently walking on egg shells in terms of maintaining peace...

D. Hence, it is a matter of survival in this twentieth century to learn how to live together as a world family, world community. Idea of a global family is not new and this twentieth century is that time when all of us need to take each other – cultures, religions, individuals, and groups – seriously. The question is, How do we build community, how do we establish unity? Is it just a matter of survival or can we work toward a world community that shares in happiness, dignity and mutual respect for one another?

### II. Qualities of Living-in-Community

#### A. More than an assortment of individuals

A community is not necessarily a place, a neighborhood, “that community over there.” It is a frame of mind, a state of being, a state of consciousness, a condition of heart and mind. It is that state in which we all recognize our innate interconnectedness, our interdependency, our need – not out of weakness but out of strength – for one another.

Community does not invalidate strong individuality. Strong, caring, competent individuals create community. They work hand-in-hand, heart-to-heart. The mineral world works this way. Our bodies work this way. Planetary systems work this way. Nature works this way – we work this way.

#### B. Cooperation

Cooperation is the key, but cooperation is more than the external exchange of information for convenience sake. It is an internal matter existing also at the level of heart, spirit, love. Through this kind of cooperation there is a deep-seated respect and concern for one another. You are then a child, rich and true, of your own family, culture, and faith; and you are also closely, intimately related to others, your brothers and sisters of the world.

#### C. Examples

Often we hear people talk about being-in-community and not finding words to express it. People talk of feelings of magic, feeling as though they are one with the world. “It felt so good, like I belonged to everyone and everyone belonged to me,” or “a spirit filled the room that I had never felt before.” This is cooperation at a new level.

Every so often a Celtic game would heat up so that it became more than a physical or even a mental game, and would be magical... When it happened, I could feel my play rise to a new level... It would surround not only me and the other Celtics but also the players on the other team and even the referees...

Bill Russell, Second Wing

Symphonies, moments in the Civil Rights movement, religious rituals, celebrations, Japanese tea ceremony, unison prayer, concerts... (not all of these all of the time!) are other examples of the comm.-unity experience.

### III. Steps towards Community Building

#### A. Condition of Heart (Cooperation)

This is where our faith becomes essential. Building community is no easy matter. It is very complex. It is primary that our faith build bridges and not walls, that we use our faith(s) to recognize this innate brotherhood and sister hood that we share (children of God) and not use it as more doctrine or dogma to separate us.

Allow ourselves, invite ourselves to develop an “extended vision” (Huston Smith’s term). In other words, to embrace one another, enlarge our understanding and appreciation for one another. United we stand and divided we fall. If we wish to build a heavenly world of peace, we need to work together. We mutually benefit one another – law of nature (unity in variety, harmony in diversity, protons need electrons, a baseball team of all pitchers if of little us, and so on).

## B. Quotes

Twenty-five hundred years ago it took an exceptional man like Socrates to say on his deathbed, “I am not an Athenian or a Greek but a citizen of the world.” Today we must all be struggling toward these words. We have come to the point in history when anyone who is only a Japanese or only an American, only an Oriental or only a Westerner, is but half human; the other half of his being which beats with the pulse of all mankind has yet to be born.

Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, p. 7

What a strange fellowship this is: the God-seekers of every clime, lifting their voices in the most diverse ways imaginable to the God of all men. How does it all sound to Him? Like bedlam? Or, in some mysterious way, does it blend into harmony? Does one faith carry the melody, the lead, or do the parts share in counterpoint and antiphony when not in sold chorus?

We cannot know. All we can do is try to listen, carefully and with full attention, to each voice in turn as it is raised to the divine.

Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, p. 2

(You may want to add two or three Bible passages in the same theme.)