

## **Recovery, Unity, Service - Worldwide**

The theme of the Fifth World Service Meeting (1978) was "Recovery, Unity, Service - Worldwide." The keynote address on this theme by David P., delegate from Columbia, was so brilliant it was not only acclaimed by his immediate audience in Helsinki, Finland, it became a kind of minor classic as it was reproduced and distributed widely in the Fellowship. It is reproduced in full here:

"The event we now open is indeed wonderful. We have gathered because, in spite of all our differences, we have something in common that binds us together with strong ties. We have known the process of a painful sickness. We have achieved, by the grace of God, a recovery which now allows us to live and to love again. We are involved in the spirit of unity that gives us strength. We are impelled by a desire to give service. We are the inheritors of the Legacies of A.A.

"The astronomers speak about certain bodies in outer space which, having lost their generating function, shrink slowly and inexorably, concentrating themselves in such a way that they shrink to infinitesimal size, but acquire an impressive gravity. They are the so-called "black holes," of very small volume, with terrific weight. Their density becomes so concentrated that a gravitational vortex is formed around them, a ghostly and catastrophic hole that devours everything that passes by; light and radio and energy waves are absorbed and drawn by that irresistible whirlpool.

"The same thing happened in our alcoholic life. Emotional overload led to a shrinking of our mentality. A gloomy emptiness surrounded us. A tremendous storage of negative energy took place, aided by our own guilt and suffering. The greater our emotional load, the smaller our spiritual dimension. The greater the density of our selfishness, the shorter the scope of our horizons. Black holes in the space of our lives were sinking and paralyzing our willpower, our capacities, our dreams, our ambitions, goals, and outlooks.

"Unlike those surreal bodies, we did have a way out of our condition. The lifesaving message of A.A. came to us. And the tiny universe that confined us started to expand again. We began to untie our imagination, our mind, and our good will. We were ready to live and let live. Spiritual life was reborn. We found harmony with brothers, God, and ourselves. And we called that Recovery.

"What, then is Recovery for me?

"It is not perfection, but the search for it. It is not lethargy, but a state of awareness. It is realizing that there is a place for us in the world.

It is acknowledging that we, alone, cannot do anything, but with the help of God we can accomplish everything.

It is being sure that we walk along the path, even though we make our path as we walk.

It is living today as we would like to have lived yesterday, and as we wish to live tomorrow.

It is knowing that our journey has a meaning, a reason for being.

It is a constant spiritual awakening. And, above all, recovery is a working faith.

"We alcoholics have already suffered at the hands of a powerful enemy. We do not wish to fight against anybody, not even against alcohol. We have endured our illness physically, mentally, and morally. When we awoke to reality, we stood amidst the ruins of a shattered life, a destroyed morality, and a smashed dignity.

"Through the grace of God, however, we have survived by joining a society of equals. We need each other in a harmonious environment in order to survive. We needed Unity.

"What is Unity for me?

"It is not a monody, but a symphony of individual voices.

It is not a compact law, but a mixture of different opinions.

It is knowing that our alcoholic brother or sister has the same right to life, happiness, and peace as we have.

It is feeling that the word "we" stands before the word "I."

It is admitting that we are all equal before God.

It is acceptance that different paths can lead us toward our final destiny.

It is a stripping of our pride, so we won't feel greater or lesser than our fellows.

It is not doing to our neighbor what we wouldn't like done to us.

And, above all, unity is a working humility - humility to accept the ultimate authority that expresses itself in our group conscience; humility to welcome anybody who wishes A.A. membership; humility to understand that our service tasks do not grant us power, command, or authority; humility to keep anonymity that reminds us to place principles before personalities.

"In our drinking days, when the world was only a large "nobody's land" we had selfishness as compass and our own fulfillment as schedule. Money, intelligence, imagination, and initiative were used only as tools for constructing a universe fitted to our size. When our castle made out of cards fell down on our own heads, someone else came to rescue us, understood us, and delivered the message that saved us. So much was put at our disposal - literature to read, experience freely and gladly given, and a meeting place where a cup of coffee was waiting for us.

"At first we received and used these services, taking them for granted. But gradually we began to feel that a treasure, which we had no right to hide away, was being placed in our hands. We had to give to someone else the light of hope that had illuminated our darkness. It was unfair to let the fruits we had harvested rot in the barns of our laziness. And so we turned to Service.

"What is Service for me?

"It is not altruism, but a need for survival. It is not charity, but an expression of gratitude.

It is the responsibility of lending a hand to our brother or sister who is drowning. It is recognizing that, by giving ourselves to others, we will find our own souls.

It is learning that they who give the most, receive the most.

It is extending to other alcoholics the sobriety that was bestowed on us.

It is working so that others get a permanent place in the new world we have discovered. It is remembering the words of Bill W.: "We must carry A.A.'s message; otherwise we ourselves may fall into decay and those who have not yet been given the truth may die."

And, above all, service is a working love.

"It is love that works - unselfish, patient, tolerant, anonymous love, love that doesn't have a price tag on it. Love that has no envy and that endures everything.

"In the name of John my fellow delegate, and all the A.A.'s of Colombia, I would like to thank you for your kind invitation to address you. May God help all the participants in this meeting, so that we may be able to find new and better approaches to bringing to all alcoholics in the world our Legacies of Recovery with Unity through Service.

"Finally, we should like to congratulate our Finnish brethren for having undertaken, in such a brilliant, responsible, and effective way, the organization of this meeting.

"Thank you very much."