Office of the Chaplain
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January 1, 1970

To: Various People Interested in the Work of the Chaplaincy

FROM: Mr. Santmire

SUBJECT: A Leaf from my Journal

Dear Friends:

The vacation and the coming of the New Year give me occasion for some reflection concerning the Chaplaincy program. I thought you might like to look over my shoulder as I try to chart some of the trends in our work this academic year.

A number of points seem to stand out on this year's graph. In themselves they look rather ethereal -- responsibility, festivity, religious involvement, personal fulfilment, and sensitivity. But I think that these intangible motifs have taken on at least a little concrete flesh and blood this year.

1) Responsibility. This is a word that belongs to no individual or no program, but it has been constantly on our mind. One of the important functions of a Chaplaincy program is to help develop or to help deepen a sense of moral responsibility in all those whom the program attempts to serve. Often this awesome task is performed quite modestly, such as serving as a clearing house for information or as a center of communications, in this way drawing of the wisdom and the expertise of moral leaders.

I am not much concerned with guilt, except pastorally. I mean, trying to get a person to feel guilty is counterproductive. If one does succeed, the individual may well end up doing that proverbial thing, wallowing in his guilt, with the world no better for all the emotional exhaustion. But to every man and woman one can say: you are responsible. You are responsible to redress just grievances, to respond to the cries of the poor, to join in the political struggle for social justice.

Most of our work this year in this context has been informal and indirect. Mr. Randolph, a variety of people who have self-consciously associated themselves with the Chaplaincy, and I have participated in innumerable small group discussions in which we had occasion to raise questions concerning such problems as racism, war and peace, urban decay, affluence and poverty, the ecological crisis, women's liberation, and so on. Related to this, this office has distributed a variety of literature, in the dorms and else where.

Perhaps our most formal and direct action was the "Dialogues on Racial Understanding" which we supported from the outset. A tireless group of students, led by Tina Jameson '70 conceived, organized, and carried out this college-wide educational program almost overnight. The program had its rough edges, as the student leaders were the first to admit. But it did bring thirteen eminent blacks to speak in the thirteen dormitories, among them Prof. Ewart Guinier, Director of Afro-American Studies at Harvard, Mr. Melvin King, Director of the New Urban League, Mr. Dexter Eure, reporter and columnist for the Boston Globe, Prof. Larry Johnson,

Dean of the School of Business Administration of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Dr. Orlando Lightfoot, Psychiatrist in Residence, Laboratory of Community Psychiatry, Boston. The attendance was about 40 in each of the dorms. And these speakers did address themselves candidly to that great domestic issue of our time, racism. Whether they were heard and understood is another matter. Our team of evaluators, headed by Mrs. Suzanne Gordon, Director of the College Information Service, seemed to be agreed that many of the questions reflected a failure to come to terms with the main themes highlighted by the speakers. The consensus of the evaluators was, -- and this was definitely the pronounced feeling of the speakers who met together following their presentations, -- that Wellesley College students generally have a long way to come as far as racial understanding is concerned.

The "Dialogues" continued for two more sessions on two following Mondays. Some two dozen faculty members assisted in various ways with these programs. The one session was a film "No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger," the other was a series of small discussions in the dorms. The film was received very well (over 300 attended the two showings in the Chapel). But the small group discussions had their ups and downs. Only a handful of the dorms had exciting discussions.

All in all, the series seemed to be a useful experiment, on the debit side revealing how far behind many are in their racial understanding, on the positive side making at least a few minor breakthroughs in understanding. I hope as a result of the program that there are at least a few more individuals on campus who are prepared to look squarely at the racism of our society and say -- I am responsible.

2) Festivity. Festivity is the other side of responsibility. For, when one attempts to act responsibly, one must sooner or later develop a sense of perspective and the ability not to take oneself too seriously. I suppose the one thing that the old right, the liberal middle, and the new left have in common is that many of their representatives are so frightfully serious. In symbolic contrast, at the beginning of the year for Flower Sunday, we suspended a huge, bright, 20 foot wide, yellow and red cardboard flower, in the nave of the Chapel, to smile at everybody.

But here I must report on a campaign that thus far has failed. Not long after I arrived on campus I began to button-hole people and say to them, -- Why don't you publish a satire sheet or a humor magazine? But nobody seems to hear me crying in the wilderness. I even have a name, "The Wellesley SNEWS." Maybe we even could find a Her-Block to do a job on Academic Council. I can see it now: under the title "Who's Left?" we see Mr. Goldman, wearing Mr. Worthman's hunting boots, making the motion "that we abolish classes and residences so that everyone can do his own thing, laissez faire." One anti-issue of NEWS a year is not enough. But, as I say, thus far my campaign has failed.

On the side of festivity, I think I can count at least some of the entertaining Mrs. Santmire and I have been able to do. Our apartment, with the bright new yellow paint outside, has been regularly filled with students and others through the year. This is a great joy to us, and we hope to keep the habit, space permitting. Whenever I get a chance, I show our guests a copy of my latest mini-Bible, by the German Jesuit, Hugo Rahner, "Man At Play" (Herder and Herder, 1967).

3) Religious involvement. Insofar as religion is the "depth dimension" (Tillich) of life, anything and everything authentically human is religious. But as Tillich emphasized, given the present conditions of our existence, religion will not flower naturally. Symbolically speaking, when the final Kingdom of God comes, there will be no temple, no religious institutions. But until then, according to Tillich, men must tend to particular religious forms and institutions if religion is to be

a creative force.

Which is to say, particular religious traditions are here to stay, rightfully so, and that they should be cultivated. The best people to do that, of course, are the members of the various traditions themselves, who know their traditions from the inside and who are the best judges concerning conservation and innovation. To this end, I was happy to see the organization of the Wellesley Inter-Religious Council, to replace the old Chapel Organization. This group, alias WIRC, is now living under the very real question posed on the button it distributed first thing in the fall: Will WIRC work? I think it will, in due course. It has modest goals to begin with, coordinating the programs of the various denominational groups and sponsoring a Colloquium in the spring (this will be done jointly with the Environmental Concerns Group and the theme will be, the ecological crisis). The chief goal of WIRC for the present, I think, is the right one: to encourage and aid all the individual religious groups on campus.

The story of our Sunday Chapel this year is another particular story I am happy to tell. If anyone would like a view of this year's developments as seen from the inside, a sermon by Mr. Green, "Blowin' In the Wind" is available in my office. I think we have been able to continue some strong traditions from the past, good preaching and an excellent choir, and add some new things as well. We were a swinging congregation indeed when, with the help of the fine notes of the Cambridge Jazz Group, we sang "When the Saints Go Marchin'" and broke bread together at our All Saints Festival Communion Service. On another Sunday the foundations of sturdy Houghton Memorial Chapel were shaken a bit when the Rev. James Woodruff, Executive Secretary of the National Council of Black Churchmen, delivered a prophetic sermon on racism. The Ethos Choir sang and celebrated the deliverance of the oppressed in vibrant black song. A couple of weeks later they returned as the choir for the day, as part of an all-black Service, and danced in song with the angels, right in our midst. I anticipate that this choir will be selling records across the country before too long.

We have emphasized congregational participation and action this year, as well as hearing the sermon, and that has meant a lot to many people - including faculty and residents in the area who were not to be seen (except here and there) last year. A help in this regard has been our child care service; we have been watching over eight to ten little ones every Sunday, while their parents joined in the Service in the Chapel. I hope the diversification of our Sunday congregation will continue.

In addition to Sunday Chapel, morning prayers has traditionally been a fixture of campus life. Last year we made a sustained effort to revitalize morning prayers, in terms of publicity and thought-out innovation, but the trend of declining attendance continued. This year we have come upon a good idea, the Tuesday Morning Forum, a day when various leaders of the College communities have spoken to moral and academic issues. We have averaged about ten or eleven people for these talks. But on the other days the attendance has declined even further than last year. I guess the notion of daily communal worship is not just a part of the life-style of this generation.

4) Personal Fulfilment. This is a relatively private theme. By it I mean to point to various kinds of personal and religious counseling.

I have especially welcomed Mr. Randolph's presence on campus this year, in this context. I have the impression that more than a few of our black students feel cut out from the College's counseling services, including my own. Clearly we must face reality here. Given present social relationships, blacks will not regularly avail themselves of a counseling service which is mainly white, even if they

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know that they can easily find a referral to a black counselor or psychiatrist off campus.

My own time in counseling has increased geometrically this year. This has included a much greater number of longer term counseling relationships (three or four appointments) than last year. I regret that I do not have time to do more, since the need is evident. Also, I have had little or no time to visit the infirmary this year, and this bothers me very much, since that is a natural place to be of service to students.

It is sometimes extremely difficult to measure one's "success" in counseling. All I can say is that we are committed to working with any individual who seeks us out, working with the person on his or her own terms, whether they be religious or otherwise, working to assist him or her to find greater personal fulfilment.

5) Sensitivity. One hears much about sensitivity these days, not a little of it trite. Still, there can be little doubt that sensitivity is a virtue that many of our contemporaries thirst for. Rightly so, I think.

Martin Buber taught us long ago that authentic humanity and, with it, a sense for the presence and purpose of God, is to be found only in the mutuality and communicativeness of I-Thou relationships. In contrast, the whole thrust of post-Enlightenment industrial society is toward the rugged individualist. Academic institutions have lent their support to this dominant cultural trend insofar as they have exalted, and still do exalt, "the individual" as the center of academic value. The result of this trend, as many people have observed, is twofold: on the one hand, social fragmentation and personal isolation; on the other hand mass control of individuals by non-personal forces ("the system"). At times our larger world, and our nearer academic world, seems to be composed of droves of Leibnitzian monads, self-enclosed self-sufficient individuals who relate to each other chiefly in order to manipulate one another for private ends, and who in turn are manipulated by invisible but very potent and quite regimenting social system (cf. Herbert Marcuse's phrase, "harmonizing pluralism").

Sensitivity, then, is the virtue which signifies that the shells of the isolated, manipulating individual monads are being cracked. Sensitivity is the virtue which is at the threshhold of I-Thou relationships. When people are sensitive to each other as persons, then and then only can they relate to each other as persons, and not as things to be used or controlled.

We have worked on sensitivity in a variety of ways, chiefly in numerous informal small group and individual discussions, in the dorms and elsewhere. One recurring question, for example, is "How can I be sensitive to all the poor in the world, if I am comfortably tucked away in a nice upper-middle class girls' school?" Another we frequently hear, in one form or another, is "What does it mean to be a woman in today's world?" In this connection, it is my feeling that we could stand a lot more attention to this question around here than we now have. Too many people thoughtlessly snicker at the programs of Women's Liberation without seeing through to the very real set of problems behind the proposed programs.

Other questions we hear are more familiar but no less important to those who raise them. For example concerning the credibility of their parents' religion or the viability of their parents' mores. Students generally have a deep desire to be both religious and moral, but they ask "How can I tell my parents that I am working out a new style of life?"

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Our most formal undertaking with regard to sensitivity was our four sessions of "Sensitivity Training in Racial Understanding." This group, which averaged about thirty, explored the dimensions of the relationships between blacks and whites. It quickly became clear that the blacks were quite familiar with the patterns of white culture, whereas many of the whites had had little or no contact with black culture. This was nowhere more evident than in the second session which dealt with black humor; the whites in the group were perplexed again and again by their inability to understand the jokes and to join the blacks in laughter.

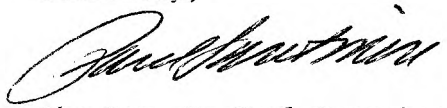
I should point out that no blacks showed up for the first session. That ruffled the liberal feathers of the whites. A typical comment: "I thought we were supposed to be here to learn about each other." Some of the whites were really "put out" that no blacks were in attendance. But we worked on this feeling, which most seemed to share to one degree or another. Mr. Randolph provided some crucial guidance at this point (his leadership was a boon throughout the four sessions). The whites -- after affirming their sincere interest in black people again and again -- gradually came to realize that the first step in developing racial sensitivity is the classical human step, -- know thyself. The first step, in other words, is not to come to know "the black experience," but to come to know my own attitudes and behavioral patterns (often they are unconscious). Somebody observed that if we want to learn about the black experience there are plenty of very good books we can read. In still other words, for a white person to establish an I-Thou relationship with a black person, he must first of all shatter his own monadic shell of prejudice.

The third session was dominated, sometimes quite sharply, by the blacks. They were especially distressed by the whites' objection to their own social patterns, in particular their habit of "sitting together" and "not smiling at their fellow students." The blacks simply asked why they should be forced to accept patterns of white social behavior. The blacks detected the assumption on the part of the whites, I think, that blacks are acceptable human beings insofar as they behave like white people. Which, as anyone can see, presupposes not an open I-Thou relationship, but a highly manipulative I-It relationship.

We role-played at the fourth session. Everybody joined in, but the blacks wore white masks and the whites wore blacks masks. It was fun -- and revealing. The blacks commented how unable whites are to think and talk black, and the whites agreed wholeheartedly. On the other hand, the blacks did a pretty good job of imitating whites, as all the whites agreed. The blacks knew how to play both roles, the whites did not. One white girl commented, "Before tonight I never really realized that I was playing a white role everyday." That was sensitivity.

The rest of the year? I think we will continue pretty much on the same track. I invite comments, questions, and suggestions from anyone into whose hands this leaf from my journal may have fallen.

Sincerely,



The Rev. H. Paul Santmire
Chaplain

P.S. If anyone somehow missed seeing the Chaplaincy brochure, "Free Sample," strikingly designed by Mary Jones, I still have a few left. I would be glad to send you one.