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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

I am always surprised and gratified by the numerous enthusiastic comments which I receive about *Renewal News* as well as the thoughts which I express here in *A Personal Word For You*. What we are seeking to provide is both *news about the mission* of rebuilding the caring infrastructure of our cities as well as the philosophical *principles necessary* for the work. This latter thrust is extremely important to each of us because any lasting effort of restoration must have the strong support beams of clear thinking if we are to be successful. The urgent pressures of the times tempt us to “leap without looking” in attempting to staunch the societal hemorrhaging, but I am convinced that we must resist that temptation by spending time thinking our way through to solutions that are deliberate and measurable, then by bringing our thinking to bear with great and sacrificial effort.

So from time to time I use this space to prompt all of us into entering the world which A.N. Whitehead described as *The Adventure of Ideas*. As with the construction of any building, the deeper we go into our critical analysis of the principles of renewal, then the higher we can build. That is why I have been pondering the fundamental ingredients of true renewal. Now remember that the real rage across our land is this revolution in community *renewal!* Movements are springing up all over! And all of us are in the experimental stage. But I am convinced that the ground of true renewal is found in the ancient truths which were present at the creation.

We are not here to invent anything. We are not here to re-invent anything. William Temple once said, “The church that seeks to be the bride of this present generation will surely be the widow of the next one.” So it is with renewal movements. No! We cannot invent or re-invent anything that has to do with the restoration of a caring community, but we can re-discover the ancient foundations which make for community and then build upon them. I am absolutely convinced that true community renewal must be built upon the verities of *faith, hope, and Love!*

You see, I believe with my whole heart that *Love* is True Reality. We enter this Reality through the door of *hope* by taking the trust steps of *faith*. Let me illustrate by our own journey here through Shreveport Community Renewal.

There is a largely unspoken longing in each one of us for a new world. All of us has planted within us the instinctual yearning for a time when peace, harmony, mutuality, sharing, and safety will rule the everydays of our lives. We want it for ourselves and we want it for our progeny. The ancient book of *Ecclesiastes* says it this way, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” (3:11) A picture of home has been burned in our souls and we remain restless until we can rest in that Reality.

The great seers of the human race all spoke of that True Reality. From Isaiah who pictured the wolf and the lamb lying down together, and called us to beat our swords into plowshares, and beckoned us to all gather at the holy mountain of God, through Plato who wrote with searing intellectual rigor of the soul of man seeking its home beyond this shadowy existence, to the once suicidal Tolstoi finding personal renewal and ultimate

meaning in the rule of God's Love through thorough going service to others, to Ghandi leading four hundred million people to freedom by believing and then proving that *Love* is a force above all others, to the one man who even the agnostic H.G. Wells has said is clearly the most dominant one person in all of history, Jesus. He was a Jewish peasant who allowed the unseen Reality of *Love* to live in him in order to become visible, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched..." (I John 1:1)

I believe that all true renewal must be grounded on the ancient foundation of true *Love*. And I believe that that True Reality can come on earth to live in each of us and among all of us just as it exists in the Spiritual Heart of the entire universe. I believe this happens when we go through a door in the very center of our lives. This is the door of *hope*.

Now, I believe that the *possibility of hope is given* to every person, but I also believe that the *presence of hope must be practiced in order for us to grow*. One of my deepest convictions in this mission to renew our cities is that we must dedicate ourselves to practice the presence of *hope!* Only this perspective leads to the discovery and to the entrance into the True Reality of *Love*. Let me briefly outline the discipline necessary to be grasped by *hope*.

First, look for the vital not just the massive. Headlines come and go, but power is found in the force of life. We believe in the decisive babies of the world, unnoticed amid the massive, but decisive for history true changes. (e.g. In his day, Nero made the headlines, Paul didn't. But see, now men name their dogs "Nero" and their sons "Paul.")

Second, trust that seeds sown will conquer. Any one can count the number of seeds in an apple but no one can count the number of apples in a seed. Never go for crowds but the capture of one life in a new dedication to *faith, hope, and Love*.

Third, learn to critically doubt your doubts. The easiest thing to do is to say, "I doubt it." But unless you learn to doubt your doubts, new worlds cannot be entered. It is the doubters which history has made to look the fools not the dreamers. (Multitudes were skeptical when it was dreamed that steamships could cross the ocean. One wrote a book proving no ship could carry enough fuel to do it. The first steamship that did it carried a copy of that book!) Doubt your doubts.

Fourth, practice seeing the end from the beginning. Picture a new world then dedicate each day to the discipline of the kind of life that makes that world possible. *There will be no new future without dedicating ourselves to a new present then living that life into the future.*

Finally, recognize that we must have a power greater than ourselves to follow the first four principles of *hope*. True *hope* comes when we admit that we simply are incapable of a new world because we are incapable of a new self on our own. But when we realize the presence of One who lives for us and is willing to live within us to carry us to a new world, we can live in the most incredible *hope* each day that joy could ever imagine!

We take the step through the door of *hope* into the world of *Love* by *faith*. *Faith* is trust in action. We trust that this will be true and by stepping out we have discovered it is true. That is why Shreveport Community Renewal always asks you to step out and join with us. Come on in - the water of renewal is fine!! Call us today!