

All About Ecumenism

News and Views on the Ecumenical Movement

NBM

Last month we made mention of ecumenism being divided into ecclesiastical and fraternal. Ecclesiastical, we sub-divided into three: ecumenism among Christians, ecumenism within a church and ecumenism among all religions. We did not sub-divide fraternal ecumenism. This time, we are going to sub-divide fraternal ecumenism.

There must be two sub-divisions in fraternal ecumenism: ecumenism between Freemasons and Knights of Columbus and fraternal ecumenism within the fraternities. Sad to say this, but the obstacle to fraternal ecumenism is race. And both fraternities, in some areas of their world-wide expanse, are guilty of this.

For example, in Freemasonry, there is that oft-repeated phrase: "in spite of race, creed or color," purportedly the basis for taking in members. However, in some countries or states, they try to keep the fraternities exclusive or segregated as to race or even creed.

Freemasonry in the Philippines is no longer guilty of race or creed selection. Since 1917, membership in this grand jurisdiction has been fully integrated as to race or creed. We have white, black, brown, yellow and caucasian, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Buddhist, Hebrew and Gnostics in our membership. We are proud of this, too. There is real fraternal ecumenism in the Grand Lodge of the Philippines.

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On the ecumenism in religion front, we note that in Tassajara, high on the hills of Big Sur, 160 miles from San Francisco, California, they have a Zen Buddhist Monastery, the first and only one in the United States. It is run by Richard Baker, a Berkeley graduate with major in Oriental studies. He is assisted by Shunryu Suzuki, a *roshi* or Zen master.

At present they have 60 novices composed of college students, university professors, a psychiatrist, an importer, a bookshop owner, a former naval commander and a sprinkling of housewives. They are of various religious sects and after six months in the monastery they expect to return to their daily lives, spiritually reinforced by exposure to the serene wisdom of Buddha.

The monastery community takes in week-end paying guests at Tassajara and use the income to operate and refurbish the monastery.

For the novices, the day begins at 4:40 AM and at 5:00 AM, they move into the Zendo or meditation hall. After meditation, they have a 20-minute Zen service. From 6:00 to 7:15 AM, they have a period of study followed by an austere breakfast of rice, eggs and vegetables. All the meals are eaten in silence. The day's routine continues with work in the monastery gardens or facilities, more meditation and services, and a lecture and counselling by the *roshi* until bedtime at 10:00 PM. △

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