

The Rectory Ramelton Co Donegal 15 June 1988 074 51013

Dear all at Embarras
Virginia, Ayata and Anne-Stuart,

Thank you for all you do to free up communication between human beings and to encourage people to see religion as a means of human happiness and development. This is important work. I appreciate your emphasis on "Women in Religion". This is so important. I enclose a copy of a magazine produced in Ireland "Womenspirit" which I consider excellent.

I'm working away at encouraging men to look at our role and position in the world, especially regarding religion. In a previous issue of Womenspirit I have an article published on Men's Liberation and I'm doing workshops every now and then on Gender Conditioning. I've been to Australia this year to work with a friend there - Tony Doherty, an Australian priest with Irish connections, who is in charge of Adult Education for the Archdiocese of Sydney. That was an exciting trip, meeting lots of new people and sharing important information about men, aborigines, women, parents, young people, as human beings with spirit.

Earlier this year I had John Cooney, an Irish newspaper-man, speak on Ecumenism in Ireland in the parish here, an excellent lecture, and together we hope to publish it, and I'll send you a copy when it comes to hand. Since it was delivered it has been up-dated considerably and John is presently finalising it.

Next week I go to Belfast to lead a seminar on gender conditioning and not too long ago I was made a canon in the Church of

Ireland. That's an honorary title given by the Bishop as an appreciation of work well done. I was delighted with that. May God bless you in your work and living - life is so good and full of blessings, people like yourselves, the glory of the universe, and I have no doubts that suffering, injustice, disappointment, all the oppression, the very principle of oppression, will be given up and left behind through people learning to share the resources and appreciate themselves, ourselves, and each other - there is pain, an indication of being, just as pleasure is an indication of being - may we all find that happiness, peace of mind, liberation, redemption

With love

Dominic Imelation

THE RECTORY

RAMMELTON

Co. DONEGAL.

14:1:86

Dear Ajata,

Thank you for the photo. I've had it framed and its hanging in our front hall underneath the scroll. Well done with your good work for world peace. I've heard lots of comment from the Sufi people at the School about the event and I'm thinking about a possible trip to California this year. I'm collaborating with Jim Garrison in making world connections especially concerned the nuclear issue and relationships between men and women. Life is good. So sweet. We are all well here. I send you best wishes and love for ever and for 1986 and you are welcome here whenever you can make it -

With love to you and Virginia,
Anne, and Frank and the rest,

Doreen —

REV. BRIAN SMEATON

**THE RECTORY,
RAMELTON,
CO. DONEGAL
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

Tel.—Ramelton 13

Dear Virginia and Ajata,

Thank you. To both of you. I love your faith. In each other and in the world. I love the way you can see things on a world scale— the breadth of your vision. You have tremendous experience together — Eastern spirituality and Western practicality. Head in the air and feet on the ground !

For me the experience was wonderful. I loved every minute of it. The Press Conference was one highlight with so many different traditions represented and each person respecting everyone else. I think the Press people were most impressed. One could not fail to be impressed with the practicality of the organization and that allied to the spiritual power present made it an unforgettable occasion. I think that the results of it will be gradual and will help many people to make 'turn-rounds' in their lives.

Thank you for your good thinking about me. The flowers in my hotel bedroom, having time in your apartment, meeting me at the airport and seeing me off— all these thoughtfulnesses as well as your finding the ~~money~~ money to have me over and staying in the hotel.

I loved being in the USA. The time in New York made it possible for me to experience the city, the crowds of people, the business, the way the whole place works and the many different ways people take. I loved the respect — how people are so creative, taxi drivers, waitresses, street cleaners, hotel clerks — all kinds of people making the city work. Then I loved the travelling around. The aeroplanes and trains and buses, the airports and all the countryside. It was lovely seeing the trees in such colours, reds and browns and greens and purples. And the rivers and lakes. You live in such a beautiful country. Visiting my friends in Connecticut and Ohio was great and meeting with their friends gave me great insights into how people are.

I loved being in The Abode. The Sufi people are special and the community place has the practicality and the spirituality which is powerful. I have many insights from there. The Indian remains, the small Japanese god in the woods placed there by one man who has been to Japan (I have a photograph of that), the mediation house and the dining room. The room I slept in was special and the people coming to collect me at the airport and leaving me to the train. I am so conscious of goodness in everyone I met. One woman I met on the train and we had a beautiful conversation in which she discovered that being herself and open and lively is the way normal human beings are. That was good. Speaking with the people at the Abode and sharing with them I enjoyed so much. That is what I like the best — moving around and sharing with small groups of people — getting plugged in and switched on !

All that and much more.

Now I'm home and I collected Jim Garrison and Clare Ryle from Belfast Airport yesterday and this evening Jim is giving a public lecture in Magee University in Derry and tomorrow we have the seminar on empowerment in the face of the Nuclear crisis. I slept very well last night and I'm refreshed and revived.

Again thank you. You are welcome in Ireland, in Donegal, in our house anytime. I look forward to our next meeting

with love

Donian

REV. BRIAN SMEATON

Tel.—Ramelton 13

THE RECTORY,
RAMELTON,
CO. DONEGAL
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

29 May 1985

Dear Virginia,

Thank you for your clear statement. I appreciate your good thinking and I'm delighted to be part of your support group as a Christian from Ireland. I've thought a good deal about religion over the past few years and it is true that at present there are no 'wars' that can be labelled 'religious'. The only exception to that might be the treatment of B'ahais in Iran. It does seem that a lot of distress seems to get attached to religion which certainly covers over the basic principles of love and open-ness. When people start to argue about religion then irrational and inhuman points of view are quickly taken up. For the past while I have been listening to such points of view being adopted and promoted by religious leaders in Ireland, and even though I know that they are doing the very best they can with the information they have, I certainly agree with you that there is better information and that this does need to be heard.

I understand human communication to be based upon individuals talking and listening to one another face to face and that all other forms of communication are developments of that. This is something which although known is generally disregarded and its on that basis that I'm delighted to support you and your other people in the USA. Anything your project can do to encourage people to meet together and to listen to each other is of the utmost importance.

We have a strong sense of spirituality in Ireland. Irish people have used the power they have found in their spirituality to sustain us and to survive. There is tremendous movement and exciting thinking happening in Ireland especially in religion but that is hidden because we are still operating out of the patriarchy. At the same time it is true to say that women are proposing to move on from patriarchal mores and more and more the message is getting across that the movement envisages change on a scale not generally understood. This certainly challenges men to move on from the present oppressive regime. The movement of women in the Church is not officially recognised, but nevertheless it is taking place and this is bringing up lots of fear for men, who, in the face of their own fear head back to the cliches of the past which no longer have any significance, except as a desperate and destructive opposition to change. There are many people who are loyal members of their religious institutions who are finding that their human-ness is being debased because of the emphasis which is being put upon the institutions and the routines. Institutions and routines are there for the benefit of people - people are not there for the benefit of institutions or routines. There are no theories into which people can be fitted, religious or otherwise. If there was God would not be almighty.

I have a good friend Keith Munroe who is an Irish B'hai living in Derry and I'm taking the liberty of passing your letter and information to him. He is in contact with the United Nations and is committed to open communication about religion. There are a number of other people who will welcome and be very supportive of your initiative.

I enclose a magazine 'Transcendence' produced in the USA which has an article of mine on page 64. Also a book I wrote a few years ago when I was in Belfast which now needs updating but which has good thinking in it.

I do appreciate your initiative and I'm delighted to support you. At this stage I'm not planning to be at your International Press conference, but if there is anything I've said you want to use, go right ahead.....

with appreciation and love

Brian Smeaton

REV. BRIAN SMEATON

THE RECTORY,
RAMELTON,
CO. DONEGAL
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Tel.—Ramelton 13

10th September 1985.

Dear Virginia,

Thank you for your invitation and as I said on the phone I am delighted to come and be part of the press conference. I am looking forward to this— to putting forward a more positive face of religion, to meeting the other people involved, to seeing New York for a little longer than the last time I was there (one night in 1974 on the way through to the Massachusetts University Campus at Amherst) and of course to meeting your good self.

When I heard first I said it to Sandra and we decided that it would be good for both of us to come. However in the meantime we've agreed that it would be better if I come on my own. A week in New York when I will be involved with other people is not the best thing for someone coming along with me. I'd be delighted then to take up your offer of accomodation.

I hope to be in touch with some more people in New York, for instance the Anglican Press Officer, Rev. Charles Cesarretti and generally to make a few contacts. At present in out town here there is a great deal of work going on in connection with an old Presbyterian Church from which a person called Rev Francis Makemie left to go to the USA in 1683. In the USA he became a founder member of the Presbyterian Church in your country and also because a big debate he had with Lord Cornwallis on the subject of religious freedom is one of the 'fathers of religious freedom' in the USA. The Republic of Ireland issued a stamp in his honour a few years ago and we had a big occasion in Ramelton with the US Post Master General and other leading figures.

I enquired about the air ticket here and I was informed that the price changes as and from October 1. There is some reduction. So what I would hope to do is to fly out on Tuesday Oct 1st to New York, and I'd be grateful if you would make arrangements about the ticket from your end. I think in any event that would be cheaper given the prevailing exchange rates. They told me in the travel agents here that you can either make arrangements with Aer Lingus in New York to have a ticket for me at the desk in Dublin on the Tuesday or send a ticket on to me here. I hope to come back on October 7th to Dublin.

Thank you again for your asking me.

With much appreciation of you and your work

Brian