

IN ROTARY, TRUE MEMBERSHIP EQUALS TRUE LEADERSHIP

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Rotary Dignitaries, dear friends,

We are thrilled to be in Bali today. I was talking to my wife Carmen this morning, commenting with her that it is barely believable for us that we have finally reached this legendary Island of the Gods, the almost mythical spot on the Pacific Ocean where the wisdom and the heritage of millenary Asia meet the waters and the freedom of the largest mass of water on the planet.

Now, after seeing a bit of the local colour, after marvelling at the markets, the architecture and the greenery, after talking a little to some of our new Balinese friends, trying the local delicacies, so exotic and surprising, and after hearing a bit of gamelan music, I can understand exactly why the claim has been made that this blessed island is closer to Paradise than any other spot on Earth.

I am extremely glad to be here today, sharing and enjoying Rotary with all of you, as we all *Reach within to Embrace Humanity*, as Rotary International's President Kalyan has wisely encouraged us to do this year.

Come to think about it: we all come from various lands and different walks of life, we all have a different background, different education and heritage. Our respective experiences differ much.

For some, this may be the first International Institute in which they have participated; for others, veteran Rotarians, this is a continuation of a long string of distinguished Rotary gatherings.

Potentially, for all of us this is the beginning -or the continuation- of exceptional opportunities for international service. Inevitably, these experiences will become a cherished and treasured memory. Perhaps even more importantly, our gatherings are also a formidable tool for service around the world. Service, my friends, is a long and cherished Rotary tradition, one that we Rotarians have maintained with passion and strong commitment, ever since in the evening of a cold and windy Wednesday, on February 23rd, 1905, the first meeting of a Rotary Club took place.

It was our founder, a Chicago lawyer by the name of Paul Harris, who stated that *"the promise of Rotary lays in its future, not in its past."*

He added: *"This is a changing world; we must be prepared to change with it. The story of Rotary will have to be written again and again"*.

When we gaze into the future, across the horizon, and explore the possibilities open right in front of us in two, five, or ten years, we are forced to admit that there is a mixed picture ahead.

We recognize at this crucial moment that the path ahead to the progress of Rotary goes across valleys and peaks. Together, we shall ford mighty rivers, avoiding swamps, and dare to explore endless desserts ahead,

with the courage to be different, to be unconventional, to go beyond, unleashing our full creative talents, always loyal to our ideal of *Service Above Self* which guides our lives of service.

What lies ahead, for Rotary?

The answer should be clear and loud: We are facing a world of accelerating change. Rotary is entering a furiously changing world. What lies ahead depends on where we want to go.

As we prepare to drive off the familiar road and start exploring the unfamiliar terrain that lies in the horizon, it should be made clear to everyone that given our task, we require a new vehicle, very different driving skills, and entirely new maps for a brand new road.

Even more fundamentally, we now need to challenge our personal and organizational assumptions about the world we are heading into – the very different and surprising world of the twenty-first century. This, my friends, is a global and interdependent world, of instant communications and technological possibilities, which we cannot escape. This is a world where other people's circumstances and issues, needs and wants, aspirations and achievements, have simply become our own.

In short, my friends, our challenge –and our results- are both based upon how to envision our future. Let's keep in mind that our future is, to a large degree, determined not only by our dreams to make the world a better place, a place of justice and compassion, but also by our firm work to make these dreams become real, by our drive and effort to make these aspirations turn into realities before the hour grows too late.

Change used to be, not long ago, a generational issue – one generation left, and then the next generation moved on. However, the change now taking place is coming at extreme speed and with tsunami turbulence.

We can't just sit idly around and wait as victims of fate or circumstances for the next generation to take charge of the needed changes. If we wait and decide to sit idly by the road, it will be certainly, undoubtedly, too late for us to aspire to contribute in a meaningful way to improve the collective welfare of mankind.

My friends, the average age of Rotarians, 30 years ago, was 47. It has now become 61 years of age, and it continues to climb. Evidently, our presence among the young is very limited. If we go on like this, our organization will experience a serious contraction in a few years. To put it simply: unless we act and change today, we risk becoming a relic of the past.

As President Kalyan Banerjee has wisely stated, we need to curb the greying of Rotary, and then encourage its greening. We cannot afford to ignore that only 11% of today's Rotarians are younger than 40, while 68% are over 50 and 39% are over 60.

How, then, can we make Rotary more attractive for the young?

How can we motivate and attract young people to join us –and then stay with us?

How will we make sure that Rotary retains its magic and charm in the eyes of the future generations? Specifically: How can we make sure that the young people of Bali, and then other areas in Indonesia, and then India and Egypt, Taiwan, Japan, Australia and Spain continue to heed the call to service?

How will Rotary develop and send an inspiring, loud and clear message, a long term vision about where it needs to be heading?

If somehow we came to be in possession of many books, or medicines, or wheelchairs, or simply much cash: what would we do with those resources, if we didn't have a plan, a vision, or a direction?

There is only one answer to the plight of modern organizations. Without a doubt, the only tool available to us to fully bring the organization to a position where it can match its current challenges is Leadership.

We need modern, nimble leadership. Innovative and visionary conductors, open to the new realities. We are not talking here about the leadership of yesterday, which was based upon personal whims and superficial fashions. We are discussing the leadership of the twenty-first century, which is how we can convey our message of service and hope, of trust and openness to people all over the world.

Yes, my friends. Rotary needs committed leaders of high ethical standards, with the capacity to clearly articulate a passionately shared vision. We are seeking men and women who are able to communicate our ideas in simple, yet compelling ways. We need to identify the young men and women, with a fierce passion for excellence, who can move others to join in the struggle or shared aspirations of service to human beings in dire need.

Once these vibrant aspirations, hopes, dreams, expectations, visions and values are shared and achieved by the new leaders, and they in their turn touch each and every member of our dear organization, we will witness the unleashing of the tremendous and awesome creative energy that has always been implicit in our ranks.

More than ever, leadership in Rotary is everybody's business, since, as leaders, we have a moral commitment to make sure the changes taking place are effected in a manner consistent with our core values, aspirations, priorities and dreams.

This is leadership requiring that every one of us should embrace truthfully and courageously the vision of our dear organization. We are here to serve, to help others and to give ourselves to others, day in and day out, thus empowering every man and woman in the organization to implement and execute our goals. Hands-on service is the very essence of Rotary, and it amounts to being the required path of leadership in Rotary, so let us begin. It is time for us to lead. It is time to turn the page.

We do know that the time for the "can't do", "won't do", "won't even try", is over.

Why aren't there more leaders in our organization?

Why are there so many individuals reluctant to answer our desperate calls for leadership? Could it be that those surrounding us are still asking to see truer and more passionate testimonials of service above self?

This leads to accepting that it is our individual and collective responsibility as Rotarians to provide a sense of common purpose, a vision, an ambition. If we wish to attract, obtain and retain good members who will be enthusiastic about what Rotary is and what Rotary does we need to somehow show to every single member what it is that led us to follow the road of service to others.

It is up to us, Rotarians, to embrace our common destiny, to find the way to truthfully provide testimonials to others.

It is up to us to demonstrate that tomorrow will be much better, that more fruitful times are laying ahead: even if for some the present may appear grim and difficult, there is a bright light ahead of us.

We, all of us, need to inspire with enthusiasm and confidence our clubs to attain this objective. And once we achieve this, I am in a position to assure you with entire confidence, we won't need to worry about attracting and retaining committed new members, because they will gravitate naturally toward our ranks.

Unfortunately, only 5% of us have invited one potential member or more to join a club, while the other 95% consider that extension is none of their business. Worse, in my opinion, is that some members shield themselves from this obligation, with the fallacy of preferring quality over quantity. They probably forget that what we need is Quantity of Quality.

They may argue that: "In our community, we just don't find people with the qualifications to become Rotarians". "Our meeting room will be too small if we get bigger"; "We will lower quality if we bring new members" etc. There is always plenty of room for excuses.

However, they may come to be sincere at some point, accepting that: "We just don't bother about increasing our membership!".

The truth, my fellow Rotarians, is that there are members who choose to ignore the Object of Rotary, which encourages and fosters the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service, simply ignoring the best and most beneficial principle of the organization.

We take for granted that: "No one joins a club not worth joining".

Therefore the real and only magnets that will attract qualified, competent, young and dynamic leaders to our organization are the Rotarians themselves. It is just each one of us, who, based on the strength of our clubs, performs the many wonderful humanitarian projects that make our dear Rotary such a great, unique, and respected organization.

My dear friends, we can, leading by example, make our clubs so active and attractive that people who hear of what we do and what we achieve will be eager to become one of us, to be a part of our dear organization. No one can resist the emphasis of success. When a club is successful in terms of giving something to the other members of the human family, when a club succeeds in bringing better living standards to a community, in improving the quality of health, or enhancing the conditions of education, the best, the youngest and the brightest will rush to join our efforts, because they also aspire to succeed.

Let's try to create a mental picture of the state of each one of our clubs, 10 years from today. Think of the members of your club, today, and the members the club will have, 10 years from now.

Who will be in charge, as the club president? Will our Rotary club continue to be a pillar of our community?

Are we currently fostering the presence of true leaders in our club, someone who will make us trust and work, give and share? Are we encouraging the presence of leaders that can make a difference, and who will make us feel valued, enthusiastic, significant and proud?

“Let’s be now, Gandhi once said, the change we want to see in the world.” Let’s become that change in actions, in words and in thoughts. And then, let’s start doing that today, without waiting for tomorrow.

Let’s get everyone here involved in keeping each and every club relevant. Could I ask each one of you to make a mental note of the actions and the specific steps that you will be taking, as you go back home?

Just as importantly: could I ask that you promise to yourselves that will be implementing your plan today, or this week, perhaps this month?

That phone call that you have meant to make: Make it today.

That bright manager that you will be inviting to the club’s meeting someday: Invite him today.

That wonderful initiative to start a new project of service with the Rotarians of Argentina, Canada, or India: Present it today!

Trusted, talented and effective leaders realize that people much prefer to lead a meaningful life which is dedicated to an idea or a cause. Human beings are irresistibly attracted by the fearless freedom of creating our own dreams. Leaders know that leading a life of aimless and meaningless pastimes does not stir or inspire. It is great causes and energetic campaigns of service that will energize and bring everyone to take action.

I have a deep sense that there is terrible emptiness and aimlessness in modern life. Many of our fellow men and women in today’s world kill their time and burn their money in meaningless activities that leave nothing but boredom.

I do sense that a growing number of individuals can give meaning to their lives through the work and the spirit of Rotary, because they realize that life is not a goblet to be drained, but a measure to be filled. And to us, as Rotarians, the only way to fill the measure requires doing good every single day.

As the ancient poet said, *“unless a tree has born blossoms in spring, you will vainly look for fruit in autumn”*.

Let’s all join in the search for young volunteers, let’s bring energetic youngsters of both genders on board. They will embrace the ideal of Rotary in their heart and in their soul, and will provide new hands and hearts, new brains and youthful energies that will eventually support our ideals of service and then guide Rotary towards the bright future it richly deserves, as we create change even in the face of incredible odds.

We all share this world for only a very brief period of time. We shall share our lives and our countries, and our families and our dreams for only a few years. Say, each one of us has 60, 70, perhaps 100 years of sharing. Very few will be allotted more. We certainly cannot know for sure how much time we have left to be here, but we do know that if we spend our allotted time well, we can make a difference that will have a lasting impact on the lives of many other human beings who are in dire need of our help. That’s our challenge and opportunity as Rotarians, this is our pathway to real significance.

Now, in closing, I would like to bring to mind the words of the late President of Rotary International, Richard Evans: *"This is our time, our day, our generation, our one chance to do something for somebody else. This is it. This is life. It's all we got. And it's passing. What are we waiting for?"*

My dear friends, the leaders of Zones 6B, 7A, and 10B: What in the world are we waiting for? We all know that tomorrow will be too late, to start enhancing Rotary. Why wait? The time for talk is over.

My friends, we cannot choose to turn a deaf ear to the call and be blind to the hand of friendship. We cannot stand still.

We are running short on time, our enduring spirit of service is eternal. We only have a given point in time and place to embrace the ethical principles implied by our ideal of *Service Above Self*. We cannot waste this precious opportunity.

It was Past RI President Bill Huntley who once declared, *"The noblest thoughts and the greatest dreams require deeds for their fulfilment"*.

Please join me in the ship of service. Let's go together to the chamber of maps, where the navigators maintain their charts and jealously guard their most precious descriptions of the new lands awaiting to be discovered.

Please help me read the astrolabe of the future. The stars are aligned, the weather is ideal. The ship is ready to challenge the waves.

Let's display all the sails, keeping a vigilant watch on the compass and the direction of the wind, always maintaining clearly the route to the port where we all want to arrive.

Let's go on board, eager and prepared to explore new worlds of service!

Let's move forward, passionately, with no fear or hesitation.

Let's navigate the difficult, often unforeseen challenges along the way ready for what storms may come.

As the winds blow upon our sails, let's read the astrolabe of the future, and discover, at the dawn of our second centennial, a road map into infinity, towards new horizons of service, to make a better world through Rotary!

Let's Reach Within to Embrace Humanity, sharing your committed love for Rotary with our future generations, so that our love for Rotary will continue to be alive, endlessly, for generations and generations to come.

Thank you very much, my brothers and sisters in Rotary, from the bottom of my heart, for your lifetime of service to relieve suffering.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you all, my personal, modest call to *Service Above Self*.

And thank you for your warm and unforgettable Balinese hospitality.