



## A Millennium Meditation

New Year 2002

The following description of the present state of the earth is widely circulated on the web. I invite you to read it... and then think with me about our work in the new millennium.

### Portrait of the Earth's Population

If we could shrink the Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look something like the following. There would be:

- 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Western Hemisphere, both north and south, and 8 Africans
- 52 would be female, 48 male
- 70 would be non-white, 30 white
- 70 would be non-Christian, 30 Christian
- 89 would be heterosexual, 11 homosexual
- 6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth, and all 6 would be from the U.S.
- 80 would live in substandard housing
- 70 would be unable to read
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition
- 1 would be near death; 1 would be near birth
- 1 would have a college education
- 1 would own a computer

As a well-off, literate, Christian white male, my first response was to feel a little guilty. But then I began to stand back and think about the description and my initial response to it.

- ☞ It occurred to me that guilt is an inappropriate, if politically correct, feeling for me, just as resentment would be an inappropriate, if widely-applauded, response for a poor and illiterate Asian or African.
- ☞ I noticed that many of the categories reflect our past, but not our future. As citizens of a single earth that we share with 6 billion others, our primary identities can no longer be 'white' or 'non-white', 'Asian' or 'European,' any more than today they are 'tall' and 'non-tall.'
- ☞ I noticed that the focus is on possessing wealth, not on the human capacity to create it.
- ☞ I noticed that nothing is said about social capital – the capacity to create and maintain a robust fabric of supportive societal relationships.
- ☞ I asked, "What is the trend?" "How would this picture be different 100 years ago, 1,000 years ago, 5,000 years ago?" Is our global village getting better or worse, even when judged by these categories?
- ☞ I noticed how thoroughly the categories, values and agendas of the description are those of the Industrial Age... and this at the very time we are coming to recognize that our future will and must be truly post-Industrial.
- ☞ I reflected on the fact that in a world as challenging as ours now is, it is easy to paint pictures that not only offer insight, but also engender guilt and reinforce existing divisions.
- ☞ I remembered that it is hard, hard work to overcome our taken-for-granted ways of seeing, thinking and living and the age-old distinctions that keep us from seeing and manifesting our common humanity.
- ☞ I remembered that there is no biblical blessing for being dull-witted; that our mandate is to be as harmless as doves *and* as wily as serpents; and that our work in this new millennium – co-creating the world's first civilization that is truly prosperous, inclusive, sustainable and humane – requires both purity of heart and sharpness of mind.

In the second year of the third Millennium, may we all deepen our commitment to grow as persons and communities that are always warm-hearted and unflinchingly clear and tough-minded.

For our shared future,

Ruben