

The Rhineland Mystics

This year in Daily Meditations I'm exploring my "Wisdom Lineage," the teachers, texts, and traditions that have most influenced my spirituality and teaching. (Read my introduction to the Wisdom Lineage in the January 2015 issue of The Mendicant and "Desert Christianity and the Eastern Fathers of the Church" in the April 2015 issue at cac.org/about-cac/newsletter.) —Richard Rohr, OFM

The term Rhineland Mystics refers to the mostly German-speaking spiritual writers, preachers, and teachers, who lived largely between the 11th and 15th centuries, and whose importance has only recently been rediscovered. The "Trans-Alpine" Church always enjoyed a certain degree of freedom from Roman oversight and control, simply by reason of distance, and drew upon different sources and inspirations than did the "Cis-Alpine" Church of Italy, France, and Spain. The Rhineland Mystics were outstanding in their courage, very creative viewpoints, and vocabulary.

The Rhineland phenomenon was in many ways ahead of its time, because the expectation was that spiritual writings would mainly come from the Spanish, Italian, and French. While all German speakers, along with English speakers, were expected to write theology and philosophy, they were seldom identified with the more mystical mind.

You might already be familiar with the Benedictines, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and Gertrude the Great (1256-1302); the Beguine, Mechtilde of Magdeburg (1210-1285); the Dominicans, including Meister Eckhart (1260-

1328), Johannes Tauler (1300-1361), and Henry Suso (c.1300-1366); and Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), the teacher of "dialectical mysticism" and "learned ignorance." In more recent history, another Rhineland Mystic who might surprise (or shock) some of you was Carl Gustave Jung (1875-1961), who lived much of his life on the southern end of the Rhine in both Basel and Zurich, Switzerland. He himself admits to being influenced by Hildegard, Eckhart, and Nicholas of Cusa's fascination with "the opposites."

The mystical path was largely mistrusted and, some would say, squelched after Martin Luther's strongly stated prejudice against "mysticism," emphasizing Scripture to such a degree that personal spiritual experience was considered unimportant and almost always suspect. Of course he had seen its misuse and manipulation in the medieval Catholic world, where pre-rational thinking was commonly confused with trans-rational thinking. Luther's much-needed contribution led us to an early stage "rational" (transactional) use of the Scriptures, as a corrective to Catholic excesses, but then he seemed to get trapped there. Nevertheless, the Lutheran tradition produced several profound mystics, such as the German shoemaker, Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), and the amazing Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), who inspired his own mystical branch of Christianity, Swedenborgianism.

Much Catholic theology and philosophy, such as that of Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus, helped many Catholics to

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"Universal Man," manuscript illumination from *Scivias* by Hildegard of Bingen, 1165.

Hildegard was far ahead of her place and time, a Renaissance woman from north of the Alps, outside centers of influence, and yet she combined art, music, poetry, ecology, medicine, community, healing, and early feminism.

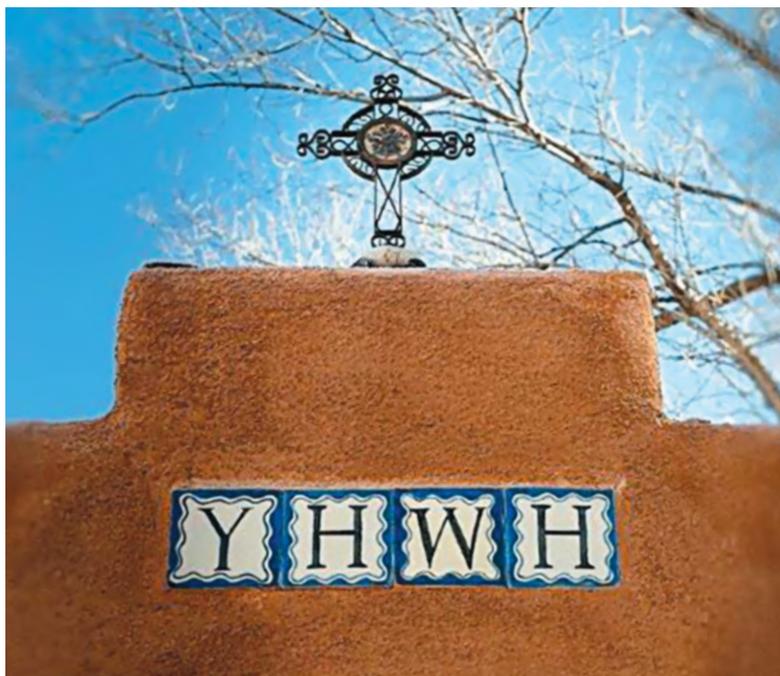


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► Turn Information into Transformation

The question for us is always "how can we turn information into transformation?" How can we use the sacred texts, tradition, and experience to lead people into new places with God, with life, with themselves? — Richard Rohr, OFM

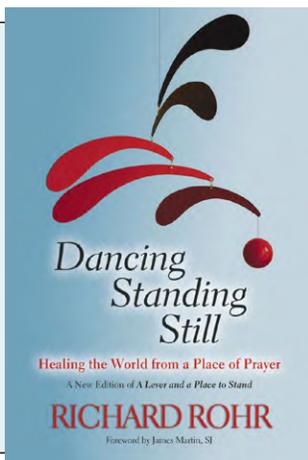
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Dancing Standing Still is filled with insights from Richard Rohr's ever-deepening spiritual journey. Don't let its thin size fool you: it is both deep and wide in wisdom. Densely packed with sparkling gems, its broad range covers most of Fr. Richard's well-loved themes in a near-poetic manner. Throughout, Fr. Richard's long-standing teachings come to life: truly helpful, transformative action in the world results from our own personal transformation through



contemplative prayer. In fact, the book itself may be an agent of transformation for many.

In *Dancing Standing Still*, Fr. Richard has created something that is "usable for God." It truly feels "living and active" because it helps open us to the God who transforms us. I trust that God will use it for much good!

— Judy Traeger,
longtime friend and supporter of the
CAC and former Board member

What are Current Living School Students Experiencing?

I had been an intense God-seeker my entire adult life when I arrived at the Living School in the fall of 2013. My faith narrative had included a contemplative path, seminary, and a short career as a United Methodist pastor, and I was working for a global hunger and relief nonprofit. The Living School was a lifeline for me to all that our faculty presented to us during that first Symposium—such as the non-dual “naked now,” “wisdom of the heart,” and the “infinity of the infinite God infinitely loving us.” Above all, what I hoped for was that the Christian path would remain viable for me and, in my paraphrase of Fr. Richard’s words, “that my heart could find itself smiling at Tide boxes in Kmart.”

I threw myself before the fire hydrant of reading assignments. Always an avid student, reading was my consolation on such an uncertain journey, along with the community of new friends who shared my passion for learning. Many of us in the Living School had known an agonizing longing for the types of conversations that began immediately upon check-in. Core texts seemed at times surprisingly heady for a group who sought the experiential, but we were gaining the foundation of a lineage; a lineage at times new and revelatory, and in opposition to what many of us encountered at home. As my library grew, Jim Finley was



always in the background, advising us to slow down and find among these mystics a teacher, a practice, and a community, and to go deep in one place.

I realized I’d spent years at the smorgasbord of spiritual literary delights, skimming the surface and never allowing any one teacher to have his or her full way with me. So when Meister Eckhart stirred my soul, calling me to “do nothing for God,” “let go and be,” I stopped and made the transforming decision to give myself over to him and his “wayless way.” Drawn by his sermons into the dynamism of the Trinity, everything we’d learned became more relevant.

Once I was grounded in one mystic, I was able to see unity in all. As my future unfolds in the immediacy of each moment, I now know the fullness in my soul, the paradox of wanting more, and the ability to rest in having all I need.

—Lee Warren

Lee Warren received an MDiv from Duke University and pastored two United Methodist churches before joining Stop Hunger Now, an international hunger and relief organization. Following her first year of the Living School, Lee retired. She now allows time for her grown children and grandchildren, for discernment and spiritual study, and for a long-delayed call to work with hospice. Lee and her husband, Charles, live in South Hill, Virginia.

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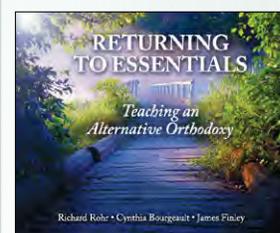
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Getting to Know Our Donors: *Friar Bertin on Friar Richard*

I first met Richard Rohr in the late 70s or early 80s at an Enneagram workshop at the Paraclete Foundation House in Jemez Springs, New Mexico. We've stayed in touch ever since and have had many opportunities to share our journeys and challenges as friars in the post-Vatican II Church.

In the early days, we both worked with young people and the marginalized—Richard in Cincinnati, Ohio, and I in Dittmer, Missouri, where I founded a juvenile residential program for the homeless. Years later, inspired by the MROP (Men's Rites of Passage), a unique and successful mentoring program developed by Richard and now sponsored by Illuman, I was compelled to go on a vision quest.

One of Richard's many gifts is his ability to integrate the great eastern and western religious traditions in his teachings. He's also invited many great wisdom teachers



to present with him at CAC-sponsored conferences. His mission and vision resonate beautifully with those of Pope Francis, who clarifies that the universal Creator Spirit must be embraced for our spiritual and human growth and maturity, as members of not only our Franciscan Order but the wider Church as well.

I bless my brother for his bold and courageous example of what it means to be a true follower of our Father and Founder, Francis of Assisi.

—Bertin Miller, OFM

Bertin Miller is a Franciscan priest whose ministry has been primarily to priests and religious. He worked with the Servants of the Paraclete ministry in St. Louis, Missouri and in 1992 founded RECON, a residential recovery management program for priests, where he currently serves as President of the Board of Directors.

Scripture is Our Window

The development of our relationship with God is often and usually occasional at first, and becomes more continuous as we live. There is always an underlying presence but, through the strife and suffering we all experience, it is often deeply buried for long periods. Ultimately, though the "bright light" comes both from deep within us and from outside of us, much grace and effort is required to foster this gift.

We experience it, but how do we nurture this "good news"? We usually lack the canniness and cunning of "can"—a right and better way of doing or bringing about this state. We long to contain presence, control it, and have it always, but that is not the nature of love and relationship. It has a flowing nature and we cannot control flow without damaging its essence.

Scripture is our window—a focusing element to a nurtur-



ing relationship with God. It is through this lens that multiple folds of love and relationship with God become visible to our souls. Luke 24:30-32 expresses it well: "He took bread, said a blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened. . . . 'Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened scriptures to us?'"

Richard's great gift is breaking open Scripture for us so we can see new things anew.

The sense of faith and hope engendered by his insight into Scripture strengthen us along the way.

—Russ Raskob

Russell Raskob has lived in New Mexico most of his life and recently retired from the financial industry. A friend and supporter of the CAC, Russ served on the Board of Directors from 1997-2009.

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A Generous Life

The late Geraldine (Jerry) Hobgood lived out her passion for justice and equality through her hands-on care of Earth and its people. As she put it, "What we do and how we live has a profound effect on the common good, not only in our own community, but also the world." She was an eco-feminist before the word existed. Jerry's life had a lasting impact—improved conditions in a Colorado jail, a safe house for women, sustainably built homes, and hope and health for countless individuals.

We are grateful for the generous gift Jerry left to the Center for Action and Contemplation in her will. Her legacy lives on as we nurture transformation of consciousness that can change the world.

Ilia Delio and Richard Rohr on the Franciscan Path:

What do the legacy of Saint Francis and the current leadership of Pope Francis say about our present moment?

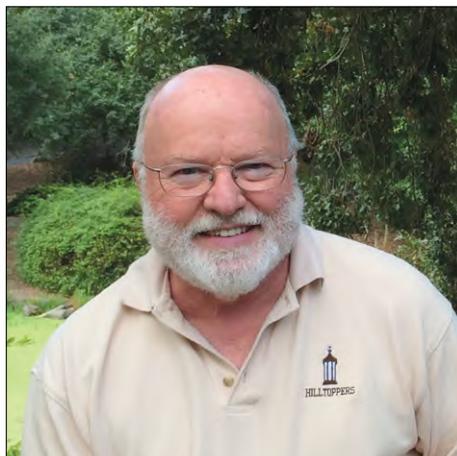
Ilia Delio: I think that Saint Francis and Pope Francis would say that our world is divided, fragmented, tribal, and exclusive. The earth, the poor, abandoned, marginalized, victims of violence and war are all crying out to be heard, accepted, and brought into community so as to share in the fruits of life. But we have our heads in our cell phones and iPads; our concern is with profitable careers, individual welfare, and the needs of our immediate tribes. We do not see ourselves as part of a whole and lack a consciousness of belonging to a whole. Saint Francis would say if you want a different world you must become a different person. Poverty, prayer, conversion—these are the spiritual values that empower personal transformation. The whole is Christ and anyone who belongs to Christ belongs to the whole; and to belong to the whole is to live in the primacy of love. So the question is, What do we love? What is our first love? Do we love the whole?



first magnitude. It is no wonder that Jesus used the word “Change!” as his dramatic opening line in the Gospels (Mk 1:15, Mt 3:2).

There is a necessary movement on each of our parts—probably one of many in our lives if we are to keep growing spiritually: We must move from “I already know about that,” to “I am not sure I know,” to “Could I have actually missed the point?” to “Oh my God, is this what it really means?” At this point there will be an inrush of fear, denial, or ecstasy, and very often a combination of all three. The refusal to stay with the ecstasy is probably the reason why so many go neither deep nor far.

This is the path of both knowing and unknowing, well-known to two men named Francis, that Sr. Ilia Delio, Shane Claiborne, and I will lead you along during the Francis Factor conference. Come and be a part of the change that changes everything!



Ilia Delio, a Franciscan Sister, lives in Washington, DC and is Director of Catholic Studies at Georgetown University, where she is also Visiting Professor. Ilia is the author of numerous books, including Care for Creation.

Richard Rohr: Where your attention flows is where your energy goes! Saint Francis and Pope Francis pay attention to very different things than do the ordinary Christian or typical clergy. Their focus is on the continuous recovery of a new mind, a “beginner’s mind.” They are both change agents of the

Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest, is founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, NM. Fr. Richard is a globally recognized teacher and author of numerous books, including Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi.

THE FRANCIS FACTOR: How Saint Francis and Pope Francis are Changing the World

Sunday, August 30–Tuesday, September 1, 2015 • Hyatt Regency Tamaya, Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico

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“Transformed people transform people. . . . Francis and Clare were quite simply transformed people—who still continue to deeply change us today. Any encounter with a large or lovely life changes our imagination forever. Pope Francis shows us that the Franciscan vision is possible at every level and in every age.” —Richard Rohr, *Eager to Love*



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The Rhineland Mystics

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deeply honor reason, but didn't stop there. Unfortunately, many mainline Protestants and Vatican II Catholics have stayed at the heady, quasi-rational level. German academic theology was, and is, an immense gift to the world, but one could spend one's whole life inside its endless *discussions* with little emphasis on experience or practice.

Hildegard was far ahead of her place and time, a Renaissance woman from north of the Alps, outside centers of influence, and yet she combined art, music, poetry, ecology, medicine, community, healing, and early feminism. She preached on her own, stood up to bishops, and was persecuted for it. No wonder it took a German Pope, Benedict XVI, almost a thousand years after her death, to canonize her and name her a Doctor of the Church. She definitely saw in wholes and most of Europe was not there yet.

The earth is at the same time mother. She is mother of all that is natural, mother of all that is human. She is the mother of all, for contained in her are the seeds of all.

—Hildegard of Bingen

Meister Eckhart, who held many offices in his Dominican Order and traveled extensively, preaching and teaching, held crowds spellbound, even though many were not sure what he was saying. They knew simply that it was good, and that he was holy. He is probably the Christian poster boy for a true non-dual thinking and mysticism—so much so that a good Franciscan bishop (who didn't have a clue) saw to his condemnation. While the humble Eckhart, before he died, seemingly recanted the positions he held that appeared to be contrary to church teaching, you can imagine the upset he caused when he said things like "Seek God and you will find him and all good with him. With such an attitude, you can step on a stone with love and it would be more beneficial than to receive the Body of Christ while thinking only of yourself." Church people did not like that kind of honesty.

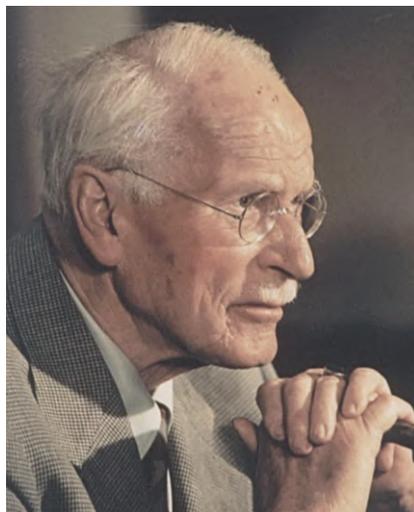
Finally, a bit more about one of the major figures in my lineage, Carl Gustave Jung. Although he was not a



Parchment fragment belonging to a sermon by Meister Eckhart, dating from the first quarter of the 14th century. From the collection of the University of Göttingen.

church-going Christian, and said many things highly critical of organized Christianity as he saw it in his time, he laid a very solid foundation for the rediscovery of the spiritual world in an extremely materialistic and increasingly secular Europe. Jung utterly knew and believed that the inner life was the source of the outer, and he said firmly and proudly toward the end of his life, "No, I do not believe in God. I know, I know!"

Jung made statements that would surprise many Christians, conservative and liberal alike. For example, he saw Jesus' life and the doctrines of the church as a *complete and perfect map* and guide for human transformation.



Jung saw Jesus' life and the doctrines of the church as a complete and perfect map and guide for human transformation.

He believed in the central importance of rituals, myths, and symbols, which Catholics and Orthodox Christians could appreciate. Although Jung gave Bible passages *more* meaning and *more* credibility, he was perceived as an unbeliever by most Protestants. His development of concepts such as shadow, paradox, archetypes, symbols, and the psychological character of human transformation into the Divine made him a true prophet of the soul and a teacher of deep, inner sacramentalism.

There is indeed a mystic stream that runs through Northern Europe. Luther gave an example of this capacity for paradox when he said that the human person was "*simul justus et peccator*," simultaneously sinner and saint. When we see in wholes, we can always find a place for each of the parts.

—Richard Rohr, OFM

Living School for Action and Contemplation

The Living School is preparing to welcome its third class and send forth the inaugural class of graduates at September's Symposium. It will be an historic moment well worth celebrating. All involved have witnessed the transformation of the graduating students at the various stages of this two-year journey.

It's fair to say that the graduating students' enthusiasm, creativity, and deep immersion into the work will influence our world for years to come. Students are already impacting their communities (near and far) by following the Spirit's promptings through their presence, action, and work in the world. And this is just the first class.

The second class of the Living School is cut from the same contemplative cloth. Students of the second class have travelled to Albuquerque over the last six months for a week of intensive study, wrestling with big questions, contemplative processing and practices, and laugh-out-loud joyful celebration. How can it get any better than this? This collective of artists, business managers, social workers, ministers, teachers, and so many more are open to being led and embraced by the mysterious call of God in their lives.

The incoming class of hungry souls will add their gifts, experiences, and wisdom to the Living School. As this circle of Living School students expands, it also deepens. The cadre of contemplatives seeking to lovingly renovate the brokenness in our world just keeps getting bigger.

*"It is one sacred universe
beloved of God."*

We trust and pray that the presence of God will continue to lead the Living School faculty, staff, and students in the process of opening and deepening their engagement with God, self, others, and the suffering of the world. As Living School Founder and Core Faculty member Richard Rohr is fond of saying, "That's our goal, full incarnation... there is no such thing as profane, there is no such thing as secular; it's one sacred universe beloved of God."

Thanks to the partnership with the wider CAC community, the Living School is able to create a space for equipping individuals to serve with compassion, acknowledging our differences while valuing our oneness with God and others. We humbly and gratefully ask that you continue to pray for us as we seek to serve the needs of our shared world. We hold you in prayer as you do the same in your homes, workplaces, and communities.

Paul Swanson
Director of Curriculum

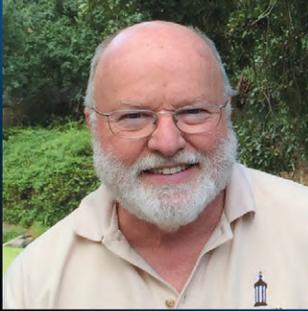
CLOSE TO OUR HEARTS

*We hold in prayer and gratitude these donors
and those they honor with their gifts.*

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UNITIVE CONSCIOUSNESS: AN EASTERN PERSPECTIVE

A video conversation with Richard Rohr and Mirabai Starr

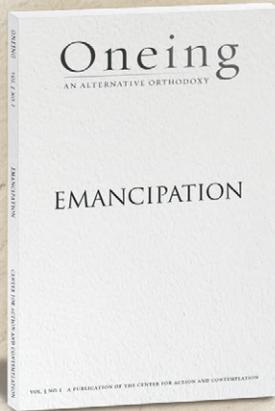


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“Emancipation happens when our contemplative journey takes us beyond ourselves into care for all...” —Simone Campbell

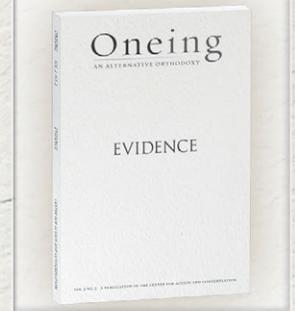
Explore the various meanings of liberation—inner, outer, personal, economic, structural, and spiritual—in this new issue of *Oneing*.

Contributors include: Richard Rohr, Ilia Delio, Simone Campbell, Timothy Shriver, Paula D’Arcy, Mirabai Starr, and others.

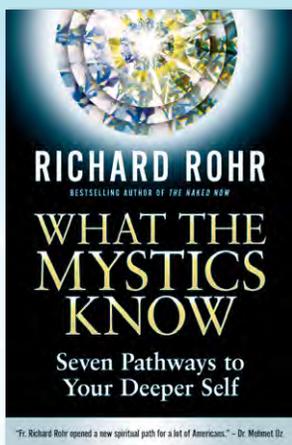
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Limited copies of *Evidence* are still available!



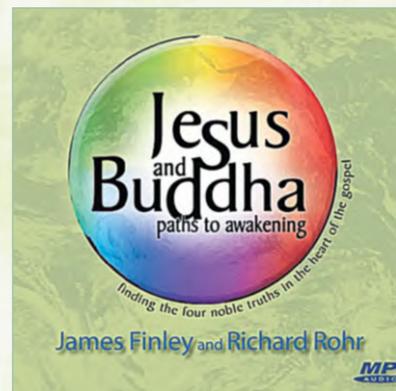
A new book by
Richard Rohr



Drawing from the best and most poetic of Richard Rohr’s writings, each chapter in this new collection examines core mystical truths from the Christian and Perennial traditions. The hardcover volume, with photographs to complement the text, is an excellent gift for all—both those new to, as well as those already familiar with, Fr. Richard’s teachings.

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