

the Mendicant

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Teaching and Me—Part II

Part I of Fr. Richard's reminiscence was published in the March 2014 *Mendicant*, available online at cac.org/about-cac/newsletter.

Soon after the young men's Baptism in the Spirit in November of 1971, the crowds quickly grew at what became weekly "prayer meetings" for many hundreds of youth—and soon their parents and grandparents—at the Ursuline Academy.

I was asked to teach a course on the Scriptures to adults at Roger Bacon High School in Cincinnati. They seemed to like what I was teaching, although there were the usual accusations of heresy and attempts to stop me. For some reason I enjoyed the support of the newly appointed Archbishop of Cincinnati Joseph Bernardin (who was elevated to Cardinal in 1983). He became my "Cardinal Protector" for many years, and I am sure my different emphases and spontaneous way of teaching would have been shut down early on if not for him. I looked like a kid priest at that point, and there was no reason to trust "Fr. Rick," as the kids called me. But Archbishop Bernardin did, and we actually were friends and confidants until his death in Chicago in 1996.

In October of 1973, at the behest of Sr. Pat Brockman, OSU, Principal of Ursuline Academy, I repeated the Scripture course at the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati. Sr. Pat, who had a practical business mind, asked "Why don't we record these, Richard?" (Believe it or not, the cassette tape was then the new technology on the block!) I responded by asking her, "Who would listen to them?" At any rate, St. Anthony Messenger Press (now Franciscan Media), decided at her urging to take the risk, and *The Great Themes of Scripture* were born (6 cassettes on the Old Testament and 6 on the New) and distributed nationally and internationally. They are still available, but

now as a CD set entitled *New Great Themes of Scripture*.

The effects of this publicity changed my life, and apparently did the same for many others, even though I cannot bear to listen to my boyish and overly enthusiastic voice. (I had learned to talk to kids in a way that would keep their interest while I was enjoying the fruits of the Spirit!) Soon I was being invited to give retreats around the world to dioceses and religious orders and especially to many groups

of English-speaking missionaries. I learned firsthand about issues of social justice, geopolitics, and church politics too. My world expanded beyond the United States, Western culture, capitalism, and the Roman Catholic Church; I discovered exceptionally good people who were not Christian at all! I experienced years (now over forty) of integrating, relearning, and reteaching.

What an education and what an expansion of consciousness! I became aware of the many ways that church was not working, that many of the clergy were the walking wounded themselves, and that the laity had become largely passive observers

at our "show." During this time the momentous challenges and changes presented by the Second Vatican Council were scaled back and even closed down by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The euphoria and hope of Vatican II went underground or turned to deep cynicism among many, especially in Europe and North America.

I was blessed to be able to stay under the radar because many of the new bishops had listened to my teachings when they were younger and they *half* trusted me (but that was enough). Even so, more than one bishop has told me I am not acceptable in "official" Catholic circles. This has been the pattern until now, and I am still not in control, and I still know that it is not about me, but about Life and Love.

Fr. Richard Rohr, O.F.M.



I learned firsthand about issues of social justice...

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CAC Visitor Center

Turning 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

We seek to empower individuals to live out their sacred soul tasks in service to the world through:

- ◆ **Conspire Symposia:** Seven-year series of events following Fr. Richard's underlying themes
- ◆ **Online Education:** Self-paced, online courses connecting learners worldwide
- ◆ **Living School:** Two-year program, combining onsite and online learning
- ◆ **Webcasts:** Live teachings from Fr. Richard streamed online, around the world
- ◆ **Bookstore:** A comprehensive selection of books and recordings (many available only at CAC)
- ◆ **Daily Meditations:** Free daily studies sent by e-mail to over 100,000 individuals

Support the work of turning information into transformation!

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To learn more about making a charitable contribution, including stock transfers and bequests, contact us by email: info@cac.org



Center for
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Home of THE ROHR INSTITUTE
An educational center grounded in the
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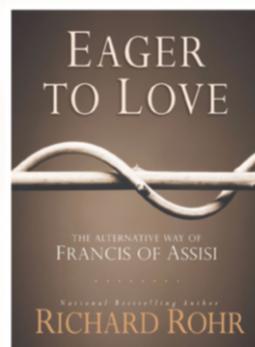
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July 15, 2014

5:00-6:30 pm US Mountain Time

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In gratitude for donations of \$250 or more we will send a signed copy of *Eager to Love*.

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Ripples in the World: CAC Multipliers

We are honored to share stories of friends who take teachings and turn them into palpable actions and blessings for others. These “multipliers” extend our reach much further than we could ever dream—both geographically and within the context of practical issues. Thanks to the many, in addition to those named here, who allow the ripples of love to cross the still surfaces of their souls and become waves of transformation.



Fr. James V. Marchionda, OP

“Contemplation and Action” are a way of life for Dominicans. We are taught from the start to contemplate first, and then to act on the fruits of that contemplation. Motivated by Richard Rohr’s writing, I more deeply appreciate the importance of contemplation, not only as a gift in my own spiritual identity, but also as an

obligation toward those among and to whom I minister. Centering prayer has become increasingly foundational to both my preaching and counseling.

Recently, an intelligent and deeply spiritual cradle Catholic came to me for direction. Her primary concern stemmed from a devastating experience of emptiness echoing from the thousands of words in our liturgy. Changes in the language of the mass only reinforced this deafening hollowness. Her private prayer came to be impacted as well. The anguish she described brought to mind St. Paul’s Corinthian references to “noisy gongs” and “clanging cymbals.”

Richard’s teachings helped me counsel this beautiful woman to stop using words in her prayer, to just be quiet, be still, and simply wait on God. Enthusiastically, she accepted my challenge. Attempting, at first, to pray without words for 5 minutes, both mornings and evenings, it was not even two months before she was practicing 20–30 minutes of contemplation, twice daily. She marveled at the overwhelming sense of God’s closeness to her in prayer. Not so surprisingly, she even found renewed significance in the liturgy itself. I am grateful to Richard for his work and I am happy to be among those who share his vision.

Fr. James V. Marchionda, OP, a Dominican priest, preacher, and composer, has been engaged in fulltime preaching since 1994. A member of the Chicago Province of St. Albert the Great, he offers parish missions, retreats for lay groups, religious men and women, and other organizations, throughout the year. His music is published through World Library Publications.



Jamie Manson

I attended my first conference with Richard in 2006, when he and Joan Chittister offered a weekend event called “Prophets Then, Prophets Now.” We were awash with insights over three days, but one story Richard told proved transformative for me.

Richard had recently used a tortilla for Eucharistic bread at a Mass he offered on a New Mexican Pueblo. Days later, he received a call of concern from the diocesan chancery. They worried that the tortilla’s ingredients may have violated the church’s prescribed recipe. “Are you telling me,” Richard recounted, “that if there was baking soda in the tortilla God was incapable of being present in the Eucharist?”

The story elicited laughter from the audience members. For me, it was an epiphany. At the time, I was a pastoral associate at a Catholic parish in Manhattan. Though the parish was exceptionally oriented toward social justice, as a woman who felt called to ministry, the reality that I could never be ordained because of my gender was sinking in quite painfully.

Richard’s insight resonated deeply with my predicament. How could the church say that the God who created the universe could not call women forward and work sacramentally through our bodies?

Eventually I left the parish, and now dedicate my career to writing, teaching, and advocacy. Richard’s lesson has given me the lens through which I see all of the issues I tackle in my column, “Grace on the Margins,” in the *National Catholic Reporter*. With every essay, I’m always on the lookout for the ways in which we Christians place unnecessary obstacles between God and God’s beloved people.

Jamie Manson is a nationally sought-after speaker and retreat leader on issues related to the future of the church and women’s and LGBTQ spirituality. She offered a talk at the inaugural Rohr Institute Integration Forum (RIIF) at the 2013 CONSPIRE conference.

LIVING SCHOOL *for* Action and Contemplation

With our newest class of 180 students now enrolled, the Living School is preparing to kick off its busiest and most exciting spring season yet. Just as the class before them, the 2014–2016 class will begin its online orientation in April, an important prelude to their coursework beginning this fall. The orientation period is intended to welcome the new students to the School and provide them with

ways to begin 1) assessing the rhythms and practices of their lives as they prepare for their first symposium in New Mexico in September, 2) exploring and immersing themselves in suggested preliminary readings, and 3) becoming familiar with the workings of our online learning platform—an integral part of the Living School experience.

At the same time, our now “veteran” second-year

students are entering the third unit of their curriculum, entitled “Cosmic Incarnation.” This winter, and on into the spring, we are also pleased to be hosting them in groups of 20–25 for five-day intensives for study and practice at The Rohr Institute’s New Mexico campus. The intensives are a key element of the Living School program and allow for more in-depth teaching and reflection among students in a smaller classroom environment.

We will open the application process for the 2015–2017 class beginning in June of this year. Stay tuned to our website and our “News from New Mexico” email updates for details!

Matt Sholler
Associate Director, Living School



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What are current Living School students experiencing? A conversation with Peter Mathies

Mendicant: We’re talking together on the last day of your onsite intensive in sunny Albuquerque. Give us some context for how life has brought you here.

Peter: I was born in Austria, went to school in Switzerland, and then traveled numerous places studying chemistry before settling in Tokyo, where I’ve been for the last 23 years (and where we just received record-breaking snow!). My wife is Japanese, and we have two teenage daughters. I suddenly woke up in 2007 when one of our daughters developed a serious medical condition. Now our path is caring for our daughter.

I’ve known Richard since the late 80s; I read his first



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book in German, and then all his other books. I attended CAC events and went through the Men’s Rites of Passage. I think the Living School is another kind of initiation.

Mendicant: What are you learning in the Living School, both online and onsite?

Peter: At the end of the first online unit, we were told we don’t have to read everything. We need to read until we get hooked; we need to sit with the content.

The Living School is teaching me that God comes to us through our lives as Paula D’Arcy says. James Finley’s humor comes to mind: “It would be so easy to be a mystic if only I didn’t have to live my life.” That’s my challenge—to live these teachings.

Getting to Know Our Donors...

To whom much is given, much is required." This quote from Luke 12:48 has been a maxim of the Forstmann family for as long as we can remember. It's a reminder to not only be generous in spirit, in time, in effort, but to also share one's abundance. Donations to the Center for Action and Contemplation and the Living School have been for us a way to honor John's two brothers, Nick and Ted, who have passed on. Nick and Ted lived the above quote with their whole hearts. Donations have also been a thank you to Fr. Richard Rohr, who with his gifts of teaching and writing, continues to enrich our lives.

Years ago, while visiting relatives in California, we were given one of Fr. Richard's CDs. His name was not new to us due to our work in social justice areas, but we were not familiar with his teachings on contemplative life and prayer. We began listening to more of his CDs, and attending his conferences, where we learned about the Living School. It has become obvious that Fr. Richard is not only a gifted teacher and writer, but that he walks the walk and talks the talk through his own life.

We knew we too had gifts to give—not only monetary contributions, but technical knowledge that would help in transforming and updating the studio at CAC from which he shares his webcasts with his national and international



audiences. We approached Fr. Richard with suggestions and in his humility, he accepted them. CAC is growing, the Living School is growing, and we too are growing, all thanks to God who is so generous in His gift-giving.

Ginny and John Forstmann have been married for 49 years. They raised two children and have three grandchildren. Both worked together at their real estate development company in the Washington DC area. Spirituality has always been a component in their lives which motivated them into social justice areas of volunteer service.

Staff Picks

"Reading *Soul Brothers* helped me to better understand myself and God's plan for humankind." —Paul Opperman, Database Manager

"*The Beloved Sons Series: Men and Grief* helped me through my grandfather's passing. Fr. Richard says that crying, which is something most men have trouble doing, cleans the lenses of the eyes so we can begin to see more clearly. This gave me freedom to truly weep over the loss of my grandfather and to experience closure in a more healthy and spiritual way." —Joey Troy, Director of IT

"As I read *Hope Against Darkness: The Transforming Vision of Saint Francis in an Age of Anxiety*, it reminded me of the admonishment of my childhood, "Hate the sin; love the sinner." Fr. Richard tells us that the world is only without hope when we do not acknowledge that we have sinned and recognize that we have been forgiven. Awareness of our own faults, of God's infinite love and mercy, allows us to better understand and forgive others."

—Karla Castle, Finance Team Lead

"In *Simplicity: The Freedom of Letting Go*, Fr. Richard shares that he goes into the wilderness where he experiences God calling him by name, drawing him into a deeper place. This resonates with my experience of finding peace through contemplation. Being in a spiritual place of solitude and silence opens me deeply to connect with "home" and provides a framework through which I carry out my life's work." —David McKee, Content Management Technician

WHAT FR. RICHARD IS READING

I am presently re-reading *The Roots of Christian Mysticism* by Olivier Clement, an Orthodox theologian who taught in Paris at the Ecumenical Institute. This book is a masterpiece collection of original sources and insightful commentary on early mystical texts, particularly from the Eastern Church. The work is so lovely and profound that I have savored and highlighted many passages. What an immense loss that the Western Church knew so little about its other half after the Great Schism of 1054! Clement offers us a wonderful gift in the wisdom of our Eastern counterpart that I encourage all to receive.

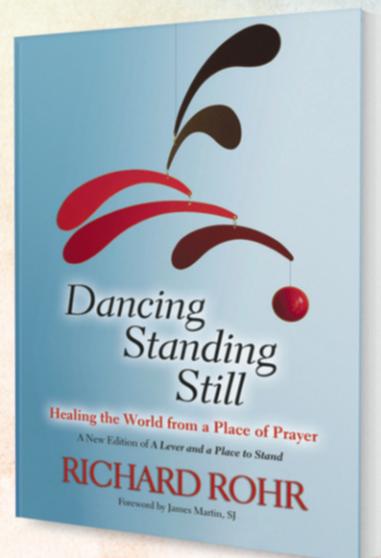
Dancing Standing Still

Healing the World from a Place of Prayer

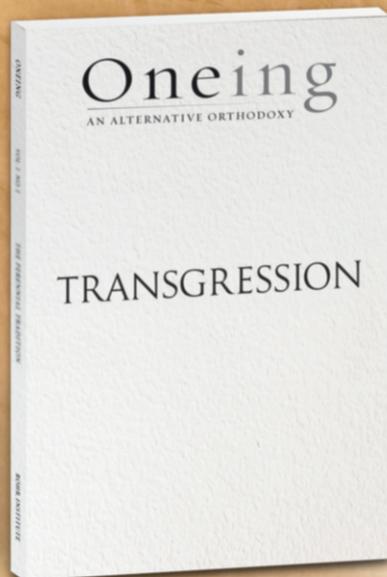
O dance, Hafiz, dance.
Write a thousand luminous secrets
Upon the wall of Existence
So that even a blind man will know
Where we are,
And join us in this Love!
—Hafiz (translated by Daniel Ladinsky)

Fr. Richard invites us to join the dance of action and contemplation, whirling from a still and silent center outward in compassion, healing, and justice.

Rich in poetry, scripture, and the words of contemporary and ancient mystics, this new and updated version of *A Lever and a Place to Stand* shows us a vision of a life lived fully and authentically, one with divine Love.



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Oneing

AN ALTERNATIVE ORTHODOXY

TRANSGRESSION

The Spring 2014 edition of the Rohr Institute's journal, ONEING, is now available!

"The law was given to multiply our opportunities for falling" (ROMANS 5:20).

Richard Rohr introduces the theme, Transgression, exploring the nature of transformation which seems to require failure, testing of limits, and dying.

Featuring Rob Bell, Russ Hudson, Avidah Shashaani, and other esteemed writers and teachers.

Purchase at store.cac.org

SILENT COMPASSION

Finding God in Contemplation

"Richard Rohr at his best... as he challenges us to develop a vision and discipline for what lies at the heart of all religion—compassion. This is a small book packing a big wallop."

—Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I.

Drawing from Fr. Richard's talks at the 2013 Festival of Faiths with the Dalai Lama, *Silent Compassion* focuses on the divine silence that offers peace, calls us to compassion, and brings wholeness of being.

Now available at store.cac.org

