



THE PATH OF DESCENT

An Eight Session Series

“There are three common places where spiritual energy is stored in great abundance: loneliness, failure, and fear. We have to be led there, because we will never go at our own initiative. These will first feel like descending, or the loss of energy. Only over time will we recognize a new aliveness and freedom.”

~ Richard Rohr, OFM

Objective

The series based on the CD set *The Path of Descent*, is designed for small groups to explore and share their understanding and experience of what Fr. Richard Rohr calls “The language of descent” — the “theme of themes” of the Bible.

Format

This series is divided into eight 90-minute meetings. Each meeting includes:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Listening/Viewing Session (25 minutes)*
3. Sharing
4. Closing Prayer

***Stop the recording after 25 minutes**

Opening and Closing Prayer

Jesus,

You are the Image of the invisible God,
You show us that
God is naked, poor, and always losing,
Which is not what we expect of God.

You are Suffering Love,
And we are the lucky loved ones.

We seek power because we do not know True Power,
We seek perk and prestige because we do not know our Inherent Dignity,
We collect possessions because we do not enjoy Being Possessed by You.

You always come down, Lord Jesus,
And we miss you while climbing upwards.
Teach us instead a path of descent,
Into a world of truth and justice.
Teach us God’s way of suffering love.

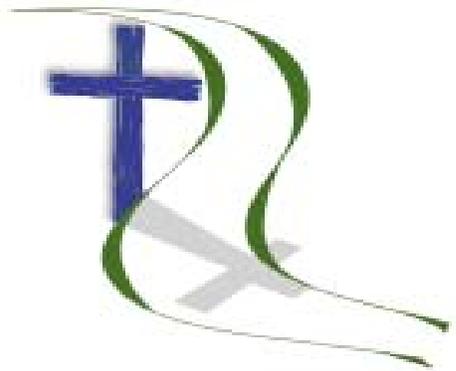
Love always suffers -
For that which is not yet love.
It is the very nature of love, and Your Nature too.

We pray because you are breathing this prayer through us, with us, and
Even now.

Amen.

Journey Work

Journey Work is a gift that you give yourself to deepen your spiritual journey. Following each of the eight sessions, you will be presented with an opportunity to step out of your comfort zone and explore new ways of experiencing the meaning of “faith.” These are simply examples we offer. Allow the Spirit to guide you as you enter into the process.



Opening Prayer

Invite one member of the group to read the Opening Prayer aloud

CD — Disc 1, First 25 Minutes

In this segment we explore the language and concepts of descent, the theme of themes — the meta-narrative. We are invited to understand how our false self affects our ability to hear the gospel and follow Jesus. We are asked to evaluate our relationship to the ego-binding three “P’s”: power, prestige and possessions.

Questions for discussion

- ✠ Richard claims that our false self is preoccupied with self-preservation. How does this affect our hearing of the Gospel?
- ✠ What is the relationship of our culture to power, prestige, and possessions?
- ✠ How does privatizing this way of Descent trivialize it?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to read one line each of the Closing Prayer



Journey Work

This week try to evaluate your prayer life. Is it a request list or are you listening and open to transformation?

Opening prayer

Invite one member of the group to read the Opening Prayer aloud

CD — Disc 1, Last 25 Minutes

Fr. Richard describes the meta-narrative of the bible as Jesus constantly choosing and using the unworthy person. We are told that doing things in the name of God that are godless is the ultimate sin against the Holy Spirit and that we should be prepared to be surprised to find that our judgments were wrong. Suffer-ing is not good in and of itself unless it leads us to discover who we are in God.

Questions for discussion

- ✠ How does worshipping Jesus differ from following Jesus?
- ✠ How can we rethink suffering, fasting, almsgiving, and prayer in such a way that they lead us to journey outside ourselves toward transformation?
- ✠ How can we follow Jesus as the ultimate loser?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to read one line each of the Closing Prayer



Journey Work

This week take time to be mindful of your power and how you use it.

Opening Prayer

Invite a member of the group to read the Opening Prayer aloud

CD — Disc 2, First 25 Minutes

In this portion Richard compares Buddhism with Christianity in its ability to be clear about the process of ego transformation. We do not come to this knowledge of the path of descent logically. We need to be taught the language and the process. Judaism proscribes empathy for the powerless and we Christians have inherited this in a nominal way, e.g. alms for the poor, etc. What is needed is for us to adopt this as an agenda for life, rather than an occasional gesture of good will. Fr. Richard invites us to treat each other with dignity, civility, and respect; thus constructing a highway to the kingdom of God, which is here and now.

Questions for discussion

- † Why are we more comfortable with Jesus' miracles as examples of healing, rather than examples of transformation?
- † Do we continue to try and prove our worthiness, and to whom are we doing this?
- † Who are the marginal and excluded in our lives?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to read one line each of the Closing Prayer

**Journey Work**

Take time this week to consider the difference between being healed and being transformed.

Opening Prayer

Invite a member of the group to read the Opening Prayer aloud

CD — Disc 2, Last 25 Minutes

The theme of the second portion of this disc is descending, becoming small, the turning away from power, prestige, and possessions. The kingdom is here and now and not after our death. The three announcements of Jesus' descent are used as examples.

Questions for discussion

- † Do we really seek to be possessed by Jesus or to possess Him?
- † How do we reconcile the benevolence of the universe with the evil that is in the world?
- † How do we take the path of descent in corporate America?
- † What night sea journeys have we made?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to read one line each of the Closing Prayer

**Journey Work**

This week take time to evaluate your personal involvement in corporate America.

Opening Prayer

Invite one member of the group to read the Opening Prayer aloud

CD — Disc 3, First 30 Minutes

In this segment Fr. Richard discusses the two halves of our spiritual life. In the first half of our spiritual life we learn the rules and the ego is created. We are stoic and heroic in our religion. In the second half we give up our ego and control and become in love with the Lord.

Questions for discussion

- ✠ Do we hear Jesus' message as one of freedom or subjugation?
- ✠ How do we transition from the first half to the second half?
- ✠ What helps us and what hinders us in this process?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to read one line each of the Closing Prayer



Journey Work

This week evaluate how much of your spirituality is centered in the second half of life.

Opening Prayer

Invite one member of the group to read the Opening Prayer aloud

CD — Disc 3, Last 25 Minutes

In the second portion of this disc Fr. Richard discusses our transition as a journey into the spirituality of descent or imperfection. He discusses how Jesus comes to us through the spirituality of the 12-steps.

Questions for discussion

- ✠ What does it mean when we say that all we can give back to God is who we really are?
- ✠ How do we deny our shadow? Is this a healthy and mature way of dealing with life?
- ✠ Must we separate ourselves from the "system" in order to follow the path of descent?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to read one line each of the Closing Prayer



Journey Work

This week try to identify and name the shadows in your life.



Opening Prayer

Invite one member of the group to read the Opening Prayer aloud

CD — Disc 4, First 25 Minutes

In this segment Fr. Richard proclaims that the message of Jesus is that victory is death transformed. Jesus holds everything in balance — good/bad, spiritual/corporal. Jesus was not about changing anything but He revealed everything.

Questions for discussion

- ✠ What does it mean for us when we say...
“What God wants is a religion of love, not a sacrificial religion?”
- ✠ Do we know how to succeed by failure?
- ✠ Why do we continue to strive for perfection as if it will earn us God’s favor?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to read one line each of the Closing Prayer

**Journey Work**

Try to recall a situation in your life that seemed like failure.
Have there been any positive effects in your life from this experience?

Opening Prayer

Invite one member of the group to read the Opening Prayer aloud

CD — Disc 4, Last 25 Minutes

True life comes through death journeys. There is no other way to learn. The pattern of dying and rebirth is everlasting. Be peace. Do justice. Don’t expect perfection on this earth.

Questions for discussion

- ✠ What does it mean to be usable to God?
- ✠ Is there a purpose in death?
- ✠ What has been my experience with the “third way?”
- ✠ If we strive to build bridges are we destined to be hated by both sides?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to read one line each of the Closing Prayer

**Journey Work**

This week try to commit one day mindful of being usable to God.