



the Mendicant

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Lineage: The Authority of What Is

By Richard Robr, OFM

When we first began to think seriously about creating a "Living School" for teaching contemplative spirituality, people naturally asked: "By what authority do you say the things you do, Richard? Why should we believe you?"

These are completely legitimate questions. Having a solid epistemology—how we know the things we know—is important.

The things I teach come from a combination of inner and outer authority, drawn from personal experience and a long lineage of wisdom. I don't believe God expects us to start from zero and reinvent the wheel of faith in our small lifetimes. Thankfully, we share in the "communion of saints," the force field of the Holy Spirit. This "perennial" tradition, developed through the ages, is an inherited gift.

The Perennial Tradition points to recurring themes and truths within all of the world's religions. At their most mature level, religions cultivate deeper union with God, with each other, and with reality—*what is*. The work of religion is to *re-ligio*—re-ligament—or reunite what our egos and survival instincts have put asunder, namely a fundamental wholeness in Love. My calling (and in the last 27 years, it has been the CAC's work as well) has been to retrieve and re-teach the wisdom that has been lost, ignored, or misunderstood within the Christian and Perennial traditions.

The formation of faith is an ever-growing understanding of Divine Reality. We see this mirrored in scripture, as humans take three steps forward and two steps back in their view of God. Sometimes we get it, and sometimes we don't! At times in religion's history, God has been portrayed as vindictive and judgmental. But running throughout our

sacred texts, traditions, and experience is the thread of God's desire for union and healing.

I hope I can add to the positive momentum of spiritual evolution. Because of my limitations and biases (as a white man, born in Kansas, raised in the Roman Catholic faith), my approach to union will always be through a particular set of lenses. These aren't necessarily better than others, but they are mine, the ones I know and trust. My prayer, paraphrasing St. Joan of Arc, is: "If I am in your truth, God, keep me there. If I am not, God, put me there."

These elements of my "lineage" have formed my ideas and experiences of God. No doubt I've left out some significant pieces, but I've tried to include those that have had the most impact on my faith and on an integral worldview.

I find it helpful to acknowledge these particular building blocks so that those I teach, and I myself, know upon what we're standing.

I begin with the first bible—Creation itself. God has revealed what is through *what is*: "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—God's eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that we are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). From nature I turn to the Hebrew Scriptures, particularly the Prophets who call us to be self-critical and inclusive. They prepare us to understand and accept the radical challenge of Jesus' teaching and lived experience. Jesus invites us to participate in the Paschal mystery of life-death-life, turning hate and violence into new life through accepting what is.

My lineage continues with the apostle Paul, the Desert

Scientific evidence from the Universe	12-Step Spirituality / American Pragmatism	Spiral Dynamics and Integral Theory
Much of the teaching of C.G. Jung	Non-Violent Recovery of Gandhi, Martin Luther King	Unique witness of mythology, poetry and art
Early Franciscanism: Bonaventure and Duns Scotus	Non-Dual thinkers of all religions	Orthopraxy in much of Buddhism and Hinduism
Patristic Period, particularly in the East	Desert Fathers and Mothers	Paul as first Christian Mystic
"Bible" of Nature and Creation	Hebrew Scriptures interpreted by the Prophets	Gospels, Incarnation and Jesus

Fr. Richard's lineage begins in the lower left-hand corner, proceeding to the right and then right to left in the row second from the bottom, winding upward through each row.

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Center for Action and Contemplation

An educational center grounded in the Christian mystical tradition

Formerly a bi-monthly publication, *the Mendicant* will now be published quarterly, released both in print and online in January, April, July, and October. Both versions of the newsletter will continue to be offered free of charge.

Connect with CAC

- Visit us online at cac.org to learn more about CAC's educational programs and resources
- Sign up to receive monthly news and daily meditations by email: cac.org/sign-up
- Stop by our Visitor Center and Bookstore at 1823 Five Points Rd SW, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- Write to us at info@cac.org or CAC, PO Box 12464, Albuquerque, NM 87195



Welcome, seeker. We invite you to stop by the CAC Visitor Center when you are in Albuquerque to rediscover how inextricably connected you are with the world and that all is held within one Divine Reality. Open weekdays 9 a.m. – 12:00 noon and 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

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 Conferences:** 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 through CAC)
- ◆ **Daily Meditations:** Free daily studies sent globally by e-mail to over 130,000 individuals

CAC'S ONLINE EDUCATION CATALOG FOR 2015

Immortal Diamond:
A Study in Search of the True Self
 January 21–April 1
 September 9–November 18

Breathing Under Water:
A Spiritual Study of the Twelve Steps
 April 8–June 3
 October 21–December 16

The Franciscan Way:
Beyond the Bird Bath
 May 6–June 24
 October 7–November 25

Registration opens approximately 6 weeks prior to the course open date. Learn more about these self-paced, online courses at cac.org/rohr-institute-online-education.

A Conversation with Michael Poffenberger, CAC's new Executive Director

In October, Michael Poffenberger accepted an invitation from the board of directors to serve as CAC's next Executive Director. Michael, a longtime CAC fan, previously served as the executive director of an organization dedicated to the prevention of violence in Africa. Mendicant interviewed him in December to learn more about why he pursued the position and what his plans are for CAC's future.

Mendicant: After graduating from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in Anthropology and Peace Studies, you founded The Resolve, a non-profit dedicated to protecting civilians from violence perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Africa. What drew you to Africa and inspired your decade of work with The Resolve?

MP: Some of my teachers, priests at Notre Dame, had lived in East Africa and shared about their experience there. I wanted that kind of adventure—to go far outside my comfort zone. When I had the opportunity to study abroad, I chose to go to Kampala, Uganda. Near the end of my time there, the LRA, of which I had previously known nothing, massacred 200 men, women, and children less than 200 miles from where I was staying.

After witnessing the aftermath of this horrific injustice and hearing the stories of children fleeing abduction from the LRA, I was convinced that I could do something about it. So after college, I headed to Washington, DC, with three classmates. We were fueled by idealism, believing we had the capacity to be agents of change in our world.

Mendicant: How did you keep from burning out?

MP: I didn't. For all my conviction that this was what I was supposed to do, I didn't know how to ask the bigger questions about life, about who I was beyond what I did. Though rewarding, my work also became a means of escape. It grew increasingly fragmented and divorced from an understanding about the deeper meaning and purpose of life, and I didn't know how to bring all of that together.

At one point, when I was exhausted and broken, I took a full month off of work. I didn't know what I was looking for, I just knew I couldn't keep going. I attended a Taizé-style retreat where someone invited me to participate in a Men's Rites of Passage, an initiation experience designed by Fr. Richard. The Rites and contemplative practice gave me a way to begin integrating my inner soul-life with my outer work-life.

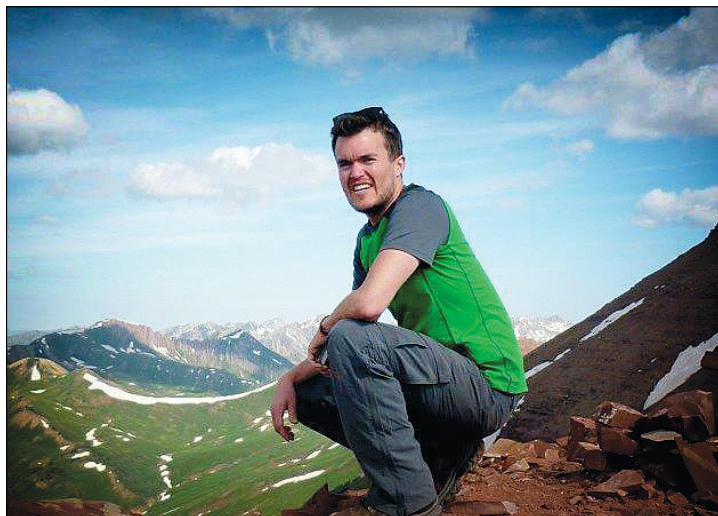
Mendicant: When Alicia Johnson, CAC's former Executive Director, retired, you came to CAC as a short-term consultant, and then the Board invited you to stay on as Executive Director. Why did you say yes?

MP: I believe CAC is a force for enormous good in the world. I miss being on the front lines of fighting injustice, but CAC's role is to equip others to carry on that fight by grounding their action in contemplative consciousness. In a sense, CAC's mission is to weave

new and better stories. Unfortunately, the stories that saturate media—and even many churches—teach us to fear: each other and a punitive and vengeful God. These stories shape the way we perceive reality and respond to our experiences. CAC invites people into a bigger, deeper story, one that leads us into encounters with a God who redeems our suffering and guides us toward union.

My previous work woke me up to the incredible power for good that exists when people are invited to connect with a sense of purpose that is bigger than themselves. Amidst a lot of uncertainty, we held onto the belief that violence isn't inevitable and we could do something about it, that maybe we were even meant to do something about it. Because of that we were able to play a part in an

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"We want our educational programs and resources to help change hearts and minds and ways of living on earth."

—Michael Poffenberger

A Conversation with Michael Poffenberger

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incredible transformation—violence dropped by 90% over the past four years! This may be a rare experience, but it is one example of what we hope CAC's teaching makes more possible. We want to help people awaken to God's love and empower them to share it back in the world in their own unique context and way.

Mendicant: From the moment you walked into CAC's offices, you've been asking questions like "More than names and numbers, who are CAC's friends?" What other questions are shaping your focus at CAC?

MP: I want to know exactly what it is we're trying to achieve. What does it look like when we succeed? How can we do it better? It would seem that putting people in a room (or online) with good teaching should be enough. But we want to do more than talk a good game. We want

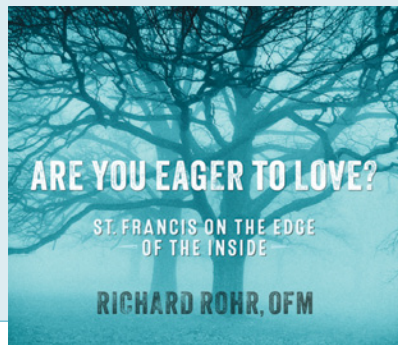
our educational programs and resources to help change hearts and minds and ways of living on earth. That's what we need to be measuring and improving.

Mendicant: You have a tattoo inspired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Tell us about that.

MP: When I was at Notre Dame, Bishop Tutu came to talk to us. He shared a Zulu maxim that has stayed with me—on skin as well as heart: *Umntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, "I am because we are." I believe it's the simplest articulation of what it means to live as our truest and deepest selves in God. True growth happens by letting go of our bounded and defended self, learning to see the goodness and beauty in all of creation and each other. Our best lives are lived in communion with each other. This insight is at the heart of the contemplative tradition.

Now available from
CAC Bookstore:

An audio introduction to
Richard Rohr's new book,
Eager to Love



Fr. Richard shares insights from the alternative Franciscan orthodoxy, engaging life with simplicity, compassion, and much love.

Listen to a short excerpt and purchase the CD or MP3 download at store.cac.org.

Staff Picks

"I've recently read *The Meaning of Life* by Viktor Frankl and I'm currently reading *Falling Upward* by Father Richard Rohr. I have found a common thread of suffering in these two books. Frankl says that when a man finds it is his destiny to suffer he has to accept this task, and his opportunity is in the way he bears this task. Fr. Richard says that suffering is inevitable and necessary to force us to move to the next phase of life. I've found both of these views provide insight into a difficult subject."

—Corinne Carmony, Director of Finance and Operations

"Robert Sardello's book *Silence: The Mystery of Wholeness* invites us into the presence of silence where we can be renewed, healed, and restored to a wholeness that allows us to experience life from the heart. We are led on an inner journey that cultivates the life-giving aspects of silence that lead to compassion and service."

—Tom Eberle, Living School Director



CAC Finance Committee Volunteers Needed

Center for Action and Contemplation's Finance Committee assists the Board of Directors by monitoring CAC's financial performance, risk management, and internal controls. The Board is seeking some qualified individuals to serve on this committee. The committee meets monthly via videoconference; travel to Albuquerque is not necessary.

If you are a CPA with significant business experience and are willing to spend time using your talent to support the ministry of CAC, please send a brief summary of your background and statement of interest to Corinne Carmony, Director of Finance and Operations, at ccarmony@cac.org, by January 31, 2015.

LIVING SCHOOL *for* Action *and* Contemplation

As the Living School's newest cohort continues their first year in the program, they eagerly look forward to participating in the on-site intensives in early 2015. The Living School intensives proved to be a highlight for our first class of students, as we hope they will for every cohort. So...*what is a Living School on-site intensive?*

During the first year of the two-year program, Living School students experience a week-long intensive in Albuquerque that is contemplative in nature and collaborative in growth. Through a rhythm of experiential practice and didactic teaching, students are invited to deepen their contemplative presence and open themselves to the myriad ways that Divine Reality moves, inspires, and challenges. Throughout the week, Fr. Richard teaches on the integration of Tradition, Scripture, and Experience. Students have the opportunity to meet with a spiritual director to take what they're learning deeper into their personal journey.

Students find that the richness of the intensive is found not only in the classroom

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with Fr. Richard, but also in the time spent sharing stories with each other, breaking bread, and in quiet reflection. Each intensive is as unique as the students themselves, who shape the experience with their sharing, questions, and presence.

This program would not be possible without the Living Stone donors who helped CAC launch the Living School! We are also tremendously grateful to those who contribute to our scholarship fund, enabling those who couldn't otherwise afford tuition to participate. We ask that you hold the Living School students and faculty in your prayers as they continue seeking to discover and live out of their True Self in God.

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Fathers and Mothers, my own Franciscan tradition, compassionate action and contemplation as emphasized within other religions, right-brained interpretations of reality such as art and myth, the wisdom of non-violent leaders, and the psychology of Jung. Growing scientific evidence is now confirming many of religion's intuitions, pointing to patterns of love and communion within the universe. I've also learned so much from people who are in addiction recovery. The 12-Step program represents the best of American spirituality, offering a very workable and relevant way of living the Gospel. Finally, spiral dynamics (or "integral theory," as Ken Wilber calls it) charts the growth of human consciousness throughout

history and individual lives. It helps us understand ourselves and each other with compassion and gives us a map for the spiritual journey.

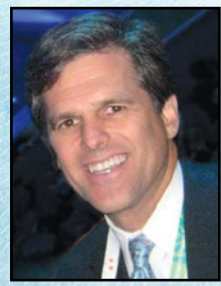
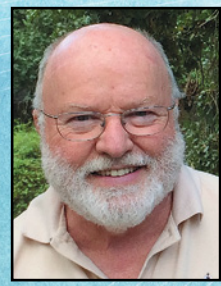
If truth is one, all of us are simply approaching that truth from different angles. Unity is not the same as uniformity, and so my own path toward union has been different than others, much different than some streams of Catholicism (though still "orthodox") and the other Abrahamic faiths, for example. We each find our own way, but I do find that it's helpful to have a path, to name it, and to know why we stay on it.

CAC's educational programs, including the Living School, are derived from this wisdom lineage. This year Fr. Richard's Daily Meditations will explore each of these elements in depth. (Sign up to receive the meditations by daily or weekly email at cac.org/sign-up. You can also find Daily Meditations on CAC's Facebook page and by following @CACRadicalGrace on Twitter.)

The formation of faith is an ever-growing understanding of Divine Reality.

Save the dates!

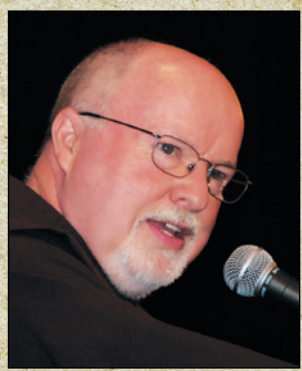
CONSPIRE 2015



*with Richard Rohr and friends –
Tim Shriver, Chris and Phileena Heuertz,
Mirabai Starr, and Simone Campbell*

Friday, July 10–Sunday, July 12, 2015
Hotel Albuquerque, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Watch CAC emails and cac.org to learn when registration opens.

THE FRANCIS FACTOR: St. Francis and Pope Francis Reform Christianity



with Richard Rohr, Shane Claiborne, and Ilia Delio

Sunday, August 30–Tuesday, September 1, 2015 • Hyatt Tamaya, Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico
Watch CAC emails and cac.org to learn when registration opens

SUPPORT THE WORK OF TURNING INFORMATION INTO TRANSFORMATION!

The Center for Action and Contemplation is a nonprofit educational organization. Please support this work by donating securely online at cac.org/support-cac or by sending a check, payable to CAC, to PO Box 12464, Albuquerque, NM 87195. We also invite you to consider remembering CAC in your will. For more information about making a charitable contribution, including stock transfers and bequests, email development@cac.org.