

THE MENDICANT

When All is Adrift

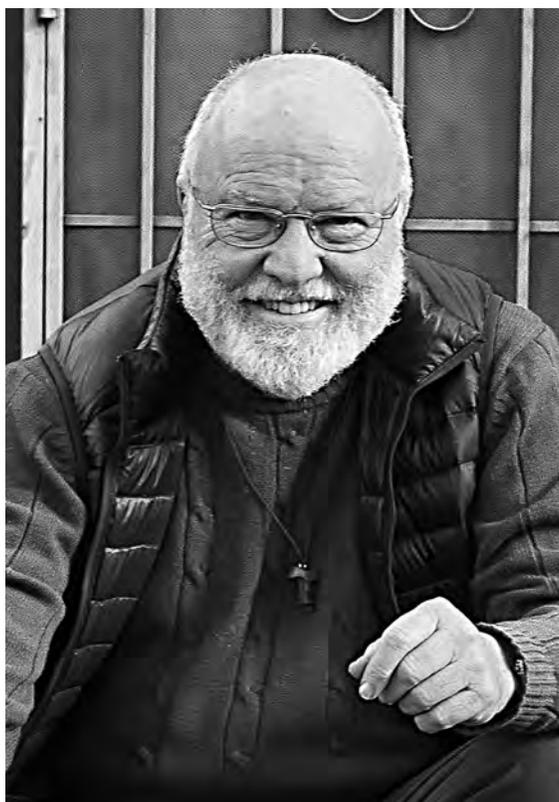
RICHARD ROHR, OFM

Dear Friends,

I suspect many of you have sensed that the Center for Action and Contemplation is in a time of significant transition. For thirty-two years, and through many iterations, CAC's teams have wonderfully supported, amplified, and communicated my preaching and teaching around the world. The CAC has done this through major and minor conferences, many retreats, work internships, the daily meditations, the broadening of my book sales, and publications like *Radical Grace*; CAC's literary journal, *Oneing*; and its development newsletter, *The Mendicant*, which you now have in your hands (or on your screen). Six years ago, we began the Living School, where we accept 220 students each year out of the hundreds that apply.

I must honestly say that few priests or ministers have such a team of partners and collaborators in this work (forty-eight on staff now)—ones who make me look much greater and better than I am in real life! I did nothing to deserve this. It still surprises me every day.

As I happily enter my final years, the CAC has been growing because we realize it is our responsibility to offer something



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more solid, broader, and beyond Richard Rohr—an organization that does not depend on me at all for its credibility. We have been moving in this direction for some years now. We are sincerely asking, “How can the CAC continue to be of service, building on what God has already done with us, and offer something of further value that can have authority and believability on its own?”

Furthermore, we are called to do this in what many describe as a time of major regression, denial of the past, and even *collapse*! This is no exaggeration, as we look at the state of our planet, our worldwide politics of despair, the abandonment of many religious traditions and Western Christianity in particular, the loss of moral authority through the pedophilia crisis in the Catholic Church, and what historians will probably refer to as the *abandonment of truth, or anyone's claims to truth*. How do we rebuild on such a non-foundation?

Almost since our beginnings in 1987, we used our major conferences to highlight other teachers who shared our vision of action and contemplation, people

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Introducing CAC Faculty Member Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Holmes

KIRSTEN OATES

I first spoke with Barbara Holmes in 2015 when the CAC was working on its Future State Vision. I had the pleasure and honor of interviewing her about the CAC's future beyond Fr. Richard. She was then President of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. During our conversation, I learned that she is an innovative thinker with a strong strategic mind. She believed that the Living School was important to maintain knowledge and interest in the contemplative tradition and gave us much encouragement.

Then, in 2018, we invited Barbara to be a guest speaker at the Living School symposium, to teach from her groundbreaking book *Race and the Cosmos*. She was unable to attend in person, so a CAC team went to her home and recorded her teaching. In preparing for the visit, I asked Barbara if she'd be willing to talk with us about her contemplative practices. She responded that she'd take us to one, so we had a wonderful experience of joining her and her husband, George, in the contemplative practice of fishing on Tampa Bay.

Barbara's recorded teaching was so impactful, so impressive, and so important that we decided to embed it into the Living School curriculum. Now every student has the opportunity to learn from her. We learned from the students that *Race and the Cosmos* was out of print and cost up to \$300 to purchase, so we approached Barbara about CAC republishing the book. Our goal was to make the book widely available, so a global audience could have access to Barbara's gifted way of connecting who we are with who God is. As a result, an updated edition has been released and is available in the CAC bookstore.

Barbara is a gifted presenter and her message has strongly resonated with Living School students. She clearly aligns

with Richard's view that the gospel is about liberation, not exclusion. A brilliant teacher of an embodied, contemplative Christianity, Barbara integrates the wisdom of her ancestors, her theological studies, her social justice activities, disciplines like science and psychology, and her deeply embodied connection to God, bringing to the CAC a depth of wisdom and experience.

CAC is very excited that Barbara has agreed to join in the work of co-creating the next expansive evolution of the Living School. This will involve the incorporation of five faculty members in the forthcoming symposium: Barbara Holmes and Brian McLaren will join Cynthia Bourgeault, James Finley, and Richard Rohr. Beyond the Living School, our intent is to expand the contribution of these wisdom teachers in programs across the CAC.

In addition to *Race and the Cosmos*, Barbara's book *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* is assigned reading for Living School students. I highly recommend both books because they provide insights that can awaken us to our history, and our shared humanity and divinity. Cliff Berrien and Paul Swanson also started a transformative book study on *Joy Unspeakable* for the CAC staff.

As Fr. Richard says, "Barbara Holmes doesn't just believe in God; she knows God in her being." She skillfully draws upon this knowing to help us know God more deeply. I am thrilled to share this evolving partnership with the broader CAC community.

KIRSTEN OATES, CAC's Managing Director of Planning and Programs, was Director of Strategy for City Church San Francisco for seven years before joining the CAC staff. A graduate of the CAC's Living School, Kirsten is responsible for ensuring CAC's program design aligns with the Christian contemplative lineage.



Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Holmes

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A Reflection

From CAC's Director of Development and Partnerships

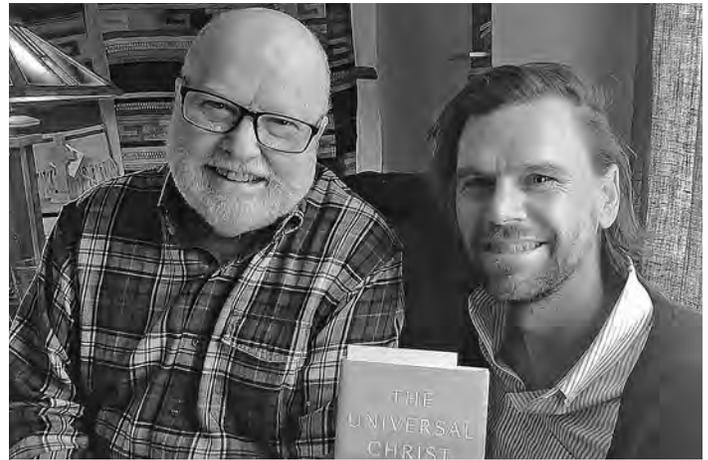
BEN KEESEY

Five years ago, I found myself in Albuquerque for the first time. I was part of a group of creative activists invited by CAC's Executive Director, Michael Poffenberger, for a two-day learning session with Fr. Richard Rohr. Although I knew little about Fr. Richard, I attended this event because I was going through a "crisis of limitations" and was looking for guidance wherever I could find it.

During the previous decade (2005–2015), I had been the CEO of Invisible Children, an international nonprofit organization. We worked on the prevention of violence for communities in East and Central Africa, which were at risk of lethal raids and violent child abduction by a rebel group called the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army). To reveal this hidden crisis, we used innovative digital media and grassroots storytelling methods to activate and raise funds from millions of young people around the world. It was the honor of a lifetime. However, as a thirty-year-old leader working on such a tragic issue, operating an organization in three countries with over one hundred staff, I found myself on the edge of my own limits.

Fr. Richard's message resonated immediately for me, in a way that few things have in my life. His unpacking of the contemplative mind and the Franciscan alternative orthodoxy were game changers in my own

I could only imagine the extent of the impact this humble, inclusive, and justice-oriented message could have on our global society.



Richard Rohr and Ben Keeseey, March 5, 2019
—the launch of *The Universal Christ*.

maturation process. Fr. Richard's reframing of the gospel message from the punitive "Santa God" of my childhood was *revolutionary*. I could only imagine the extent of the impact this humble, inclusive, and justice-oriented message could have on our global society.

I almost immediately became deeply involved with the CAC. I served as a volunteer on the board of directors and its committee working on the Future State Vision—which is rooted in CAC's ongoing desire to contribute to the needs of the world.

Following an extensive vetting phase, this strategic plan called for more full-time managerial leadership to help this significant growth phase move forward. I felt called to go all-in, left my international-justice consulting work, and moved to Albuquerque with my partner, Tiffany, to join the leadership team of the CAC as Managing Director for Production and Outreach.

For the last three years I have worked in that capacity, building the department responsible for managing and executing CAC's programs, including publications, digital media, creative design, and events. Now I have transitioned into a new role as CAC's Director of Development and

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Ben Keeseey and Vanessa Guerin at CONSPIRE 2017.

Recommended Reading

A BOOK REVIEW BY LEE STAMAN

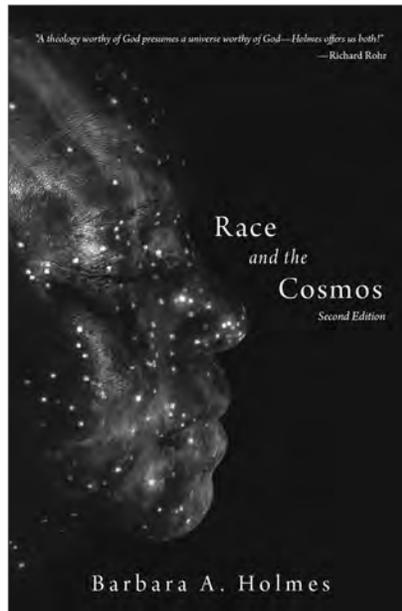
Race and the Cosmos:
*An Invitation to View the World
Differently*
Barbara A. Holmes
CAC Publishing, 2020

Is it possible to find common ground on a cosmic scale? As I started reading Barbara Holmes' book *Race and the Cosmos*, my first thought was that this was a huge undertaking. What are the connections between race and racism and quantum theory and dark matter? Holmes was clear from the outset that there were risks involved, namely the "misappropriation of scientific theory" and the swift obsolescence of such theories. With eyes wide open and a clearly curious mind, Holmes goes all-in with this work and we are the better for it.

The fascinating and engaging points of this book include a brave and necessary critique of liberation theology in chapter two. I, for one, was exploring for the first time these substantial arguments against liberation theology and saw the need for "liberating liberation," as Holmes puts it. It is also worth noting that each dense chapter is neatly summarized to emphasize and remind us of the key points and connections.

As a librarian, I would be remiss if I didn't make a point of noting that the expansive bibliography is top-notch and the notes back up just about everything presented. I have read many books that have attempted what Holmes has accomplished and their major drawbacks have been in the lack of notes.

Chapter four is an intriguing presentation of indigenous ways of knowing. Holmes has a worthwhile exploration of indigenous research methodologies that include values like *Reality is relational*



What are the connections between race and racism and quantum theory and dark matter?

and *Research goals are subject to community oversight*. Toward the end of the book, while discussing the anthropic principle (don't worry, I did not know what it was, either), she presents five insights that, to me, should be daily reminders if we are to take seriously the challenge of this book:

1. Life is delicately balanced in the cosmos.
2. The universe is our mother.
3. Location affects perspective.
4. We live in incredible circumstances, with incredible responsibilities.
5. We are here for a reason.

I would suggest that there needs to be more work in this vein. Like any good theory, the metaphors and connections need testing again and again—for example, bridging astrophysical findings and cultural trauma. The book offers superb scholarship and engaging writing. I especially recommend this book for those seeking to take a step beyond the basic dialogue between religion and science. It is an important resource for those who are interested in broader ways of knowing and how the breadth of the universe can paradoxically bring us closer.

LEE STAMAN, MLIS, is the Systems Librarian at the Center for Action and Contemplation. Currently his work is focused on cataloging everything Richard Rohr has said and written. He has a passion for the role of information and technology in the modern world, along with a deep interest in the history of religious thought.

When All is Adrift

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like Joan Chittister, Thomas Keating, Jim Wallis, Shane Claiborne, Gerald May, Paula D'Arcy, and many others. When we began the Living School in 2014, Dr. Cynthia Bourgeault and Dr. James Finley joined us as faculty. This past year, we have added Dr. Barbara Holmes and Brian McLaren to that inspired list. What a team of master teachers!

The question now is, "How can this small but strong foundation of wisdom teachers be of service to the world and to Love?" We do not want to drop into any scarcity mode, reactive position, or the politics of despair.

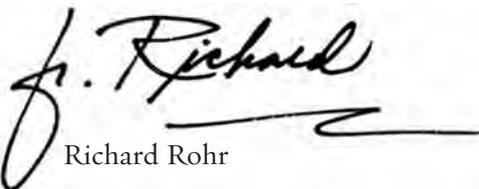
*We are all convinced of and committed to the Christian contemplative tradition as the way **through and beyond** this morass. The contemplative mind is clean and evidential. It exists for all to discover in the perennial tradition—on the "edge of the inside" of the Great Tradition*

We are all
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of every world religion. It offers us both an epistemology (a way of knowing) and a metaphysics (an objective ground beyond the individual and the ego) that are noncompetitive, democratic, nonviolent, and universally accessible.

Join us in a reformation that is rising from the bottom, nonviolent, beyond the usual gender arguments, and a movement that transforms human consciousness at both the conscious and unconscious levels. Moving forward, what else will change our politics and our religions?

Peace and all good,



Richard Rohr

A Reflection

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The CAC is in a unique position to help nurture and steward the gifts of this ancient contemplative path.

Partnerships, which will bring me directly in touch with you—the *Mendicant* community.

In 2020, the CAC is entering a new and exciting phase. Building on Fr. Richard's lineage, we will begin engaging in a more open, transparent, and dialogical process with you regarding the evolving future of this work. I will be supporting Vanessa Guerin's leadership as the Managing Editor of *the Mendicant* as we work together to bring you *insider views* from the Founder, Executive Director, members of the expanding Living School core faculty,

and the staff and global community of the CAC.

As you read in Richard's opening letter, we are convinced that the wisdom from this ancient contemplative path is the way forward through this turbulent time. The CAC is in a unique position to help nurture and steward the gifts of this tradition and we want to serve it with integrity, commitment, and courage, well into the future.

As Fr. Richard says so well in *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, "When you get your 'Who am I?' question right, all the 'What should I do?' questions tend to take care of themselves."¹

I look forward to sharing CAC insights with you over the course of the 2020 editions of *the Mendicant*, and I am deeply grateful for your ongoing trust and support.

¹ Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 5-6.



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WHAT DO WE DO WITH EVIL?

THE WORLD, THE FLESH,
AND THE DEVIL

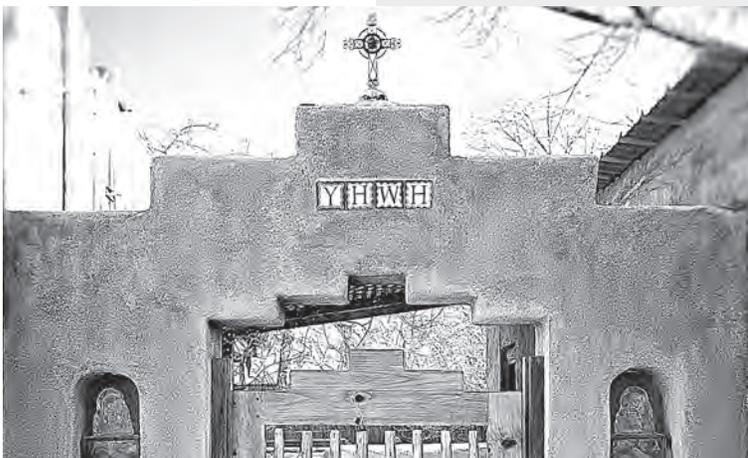
RICHARD ROHR

In this much-anticipated, masterfully crafted book on the three sources of evil, Fr. Richard presents readers with principles and a process for resisting them through contemplation and love.

Order at store@cac.org.

SUPPORT THE WORK

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