

INTRODUCTION TO 2021 DAILY MEDITATIONS

Fr. Richard Rohr

Fr. Richard:

Now, you've all heard the word "apocalyptic." And I do believe this year has been an apocalyptic time, but not the way most of you think of it, that literally, in Greek, it means a pulling back of the veil. So, the book of Revelation, the apocalypse, revealing something, like the Wizard of Oz: "Oh! It's not like we thought it was." It's a form of literature somewhat akin to our science fiction, which presents, dramatically, an utterly different world, and reveals the artificiality and the passing nature of business as usual. Now the only way it can do that is by dramatic metaphors. The ones Christians are most familiar with are the moon turning to blood; the stars falling from the sky; people being raptured. It calls everything, everything into question, and the only way they can do that is by cosmological language.

Now the point is, and here's where most of us got it wrong, the way apocalyptic moment or apocalypse is used in common parlance is a metaphor for disastrous—everything is terrible. That's not really it's meaning. The meaning is almost the opposite. The current is revealed as passing and falling apart, so you're shocked into recognition of the possibility of a different order.

So, that's going to be our whole theme this year: unveiling, pulling back the veil, and showing how good religion does that. Now, what we're stuck with is a lot of religion which isn't so good. It—and this will be my final point—it tells us that what we're offered is Nirvana, fantasy land, a dream world where everybody loves everybody. And we're all constantly discouraged, "Why isn't this happening yet?" I want to say as strongly as I can: I believe the Gospel is not about any idealism. And I know you're disappointed to hear me say that. It's not about an ideal world where everybody loves everybody.

Now, yes, that is our formal desire, but the Gospel is much more subtle than that. It's not idealism, it's utter realism. It is dream as long as you can incorporate a great big twist. Can you live with that? Most of us don't want to because the twist—our word for that is the cruciform nature of reality—is always a disappointment. The tragic sense of life, the absurd sense of everything, that's the Gospel in my opinion. Now, in one of my recent books I call it "disorder." How can you incorporate disorder inside of order? Travel with us this year, and we're going to find a hundred ways of talking about that, but I hope in a way that makes sense and is really helpful. Thank you, and I mean it, thank you for trusting me, for trusting us.