The above quote from Jesus (Luke 12:48) might be considered the Christian equivalent of what Hindus and Buddhists call “karma,” or, to reverse some modern slang, “What comes around, goes around.” This is not about any monetary payment, but a certain kind of inevitability or even a “divine economy.”

In the world of grace and freedom, for a channel to be opened, it must flow forward, through, and toward something else—or the channel becomes blocked. Negative energy and intention produce a negative energy response—usually quite quickly. We clamp on to it like Velcro, one study claims. In contrast, positive energy and intention produce positive energy outflow—if not now, eventually. The positive and appreciative response demands consciousness and choice—and freedom on our part. Otherwise, it slides off us like Teflon, the same study states. Appreciation and gratitude must be chosen.

All that I have been given gratuitously (the “free flow”) is usually unrecognized and unappreciated. Instead, I concentrate on how I have been offended. My negative rebound is almost always immediate—and unrecognized as negative energy on my part. It is thus “deserved,” and I am entitled to my nasty response, I imagine! The ungrateful nerve itches and demands scratching. This is negative karma. We need to work and pray for most of our lives to recognize and resist this game. Negative karma is much more powerful than positive. Velcro works better than Teflon, apparently.

Now, after assuring you karma is not primarily monetary, I must in all honesty state that karma is monetary too. After all, the monetary system is our overwhelming symbol and substance for how we exchange. Our attitude toward the earning, giving, losing, and receiving of money is about as good a measure for our giving and receiving of love as anything I know. The opposite is true too. Stingy with love, stingy with money. Generous with love, generous with money. Circumspect with love, circumspect with money. In a general sense, we are either flow people or dam (!) people.

I think it is fair to say that the CAC has been mostly a flow organization since its beginnings almost thirty-three years ago. We have always been generous with our earnings and donations, sharing them as scholarships, large donations to partnering organizations, and with the poor—while also paying our staff a good wage and benefits (except for the first ten years!). We always knew we had been blessed, but also sought to pass it on in ways that reflect our mission and values. Last year, we dedicated 5% of our budget to support partners in our emerging Christian contemplative [continued on page 5]
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—Richard Rohr

took a large pay cut when I left the medical field to work for the CAC seventeen years ago, but I was ready for a change. I’ve never regretted my decision, even though it was my work in the medical field that sustained me as a not-so-struggling artist for many years.

I was initially invited to join the CAC team as the volunteer coordinator and I agreed to an hourly wage of $13.64, which apparently each of the other dozen or so staff members also earned. I didn’t give it a second thought, because the opportunity to do something new in a very different field was very compelling. I’ve never let money—or the lack of it—get in the way of pursuing something important to me.

I had been groomed from early childhood to be an artist. I thought my combined degree in fine arts and religious studies (with a focus on the English and Spanish mystics) would be the key to making an art historical contribution at some point in my life—every serious artist’s overly ambitious goal. Little did I know this intentional combination of studies was, in fact, preparation for my work at CAC—and the great path of descent from my egoic desires. As a dear CAC friend famously says, “That God, what a kidder!”

I’ve worn many hats at CAC, often piled on top of one another. Within two years, I was editing *Radical Grace*—CAC’s first publication—and facilitating events and work internships. It was a lot, but I loved the work and so I was able to juggle the many hats with ease—most of the time!

Except for annual cost of living increases, I don’t recall significant pay raises during my first seven years of working for CAC. However, I was grateful for the many and varied rich benefits, including amazing conferences with top-notch presenters; travel for out-of-state events, including a trip to Assisi, Italy—home of CAC founder Fr. Richard Rohr’s spiritual father Francis; and, most importantly, making many new acquaintances and friends throughout the years.

When a new director joined the staff in 2011, a serious inventory of all things CAC was taken, including a review of salaries, which were brought up to industry standards. This allowed for the first significant increase in my salary and prompted me to suggest that we transform *Radical Grace*—a quarterly publication—into a biannual literary journal to honor the excellent, high-level contributors we had been publishing throughout the years. This led to the birth of *Oneing*.

My comprehensive education in art and religious studies has proven useful in my current work as Director of Publications. I tell everyone that I have the best job at CAC, because I get to publish tangible, long-lasting, impactful products. Together with my long-time editorial and graphic design contractors, I’m proud to manage production of CAC’s development newsletter *the Mendicant*, *Oneing*, and books by faculty members Fr. Richard Rohr and Dr. Barbara Holmes.

Although I continue to work with CAC’s Core Volunteers, there haven’t
It is incredibly inspiring how many of you are investing in a life of conscious prayer and purposeful action to help awaken a more loving, just, and peaceful world. When we hear your stories, we are impressed by the commitment so many of you have made to simple, humble, and generative living. A common lament I hear quite frequently, however, is that many of you feel alone or isolated in the spiritual journey when you are surrounded by so much conventional thinking and mainstream religious dogma. “Am I the only one who thinks like this?” is sadly a frequent feeling among many.

I am here to say, “You are not alone.” You are part of a dispersed but growing group of people around the world who are “living freely on the edge of the inside,” as Fr. Richard described in his opening letter. In doing so, you are standing “shoulder to shoulder in spirit” with thousands of other people who are living out their sacred values.

To give you a view into the size and commitment of this community, here are a few statistics about our donors and partners. In the calendar year 2020, during all the struggles that we collectively faced, 35,572 people from over a dozen countries made a donation to the CAC. The average donation was $77.53 and the average person donated 2.091 times. 3,609 people were participating as incredibly valuable recurring donors, giving a consistent donation every single month.

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Our largest donation was $100,000 and our smallest—you guessed it—was $1. All gifts were received with gratitude and appreciation, regardless of the amount. These donations added up to $5,767,547 in 2020, the most ever for one year at the CAC. Your giving is a sign of your partnership and co-creation in this work: to offer the gifts of the contemplative tradition in service to the healing of ourselves and our world.

We offer a deep bow in gratitude for your generosity, trust, and partnership (in large ways and small). As always, if you need anything or want to discuss making a legacy or estate gift, please reach out to us at Development@cac.org. Thank you.

BEN KEESEY is the Director of Development and Partnerships for the CAC. He joined the team in 2016 and helped expand the program and communications capacity through building the Production and Outreach Department. Before joining the CAC, Ben was the Executive Director of Invisible Children, an international charitable organization.
Early last year, when we first started exploring a few key questions around how the CAC stewards its financial resources, no one could have anticipated that we'd be completing a comprehensive, board-approved financial philosophy by December. Our newly adopted philosophy, which captures Fr. Richard’s theological themes around money, the CAC’s key financial principles, and operational implications around how we budget, spend, generate, and invest our financial resources, embodies our commitment to align our financial decisions with our organizational values and spiritual lineage.

The process we went through addressed multiple dimensions of how we relate to money as an organization. For example, as CAC continues to grow in resources through generous financial support, one of the core questions with which we grappled as we developed our philosophy is this: How do we meet our financial needs from a place of love? From that question, one of our theological themes around money emerged: We must consider both our own organizational health and our responsibility to the common good as part of all our financial decisions. With the generous support and trust of so many individuals contributing to our mission, we feel a particular responsibility to live out our values as an institution as part of how we serve our wider community.

One of the most inspiring questions that emerged centered around how we can utilize our financial resources to both support our mission in the traditional ways (by making more and more of our programs accessible, regardless of participants’ financial means), while also making all financial transactions into opportunities for deeper relationship and mission advancement. In other words, when we acknowledge that our relationship with money oftentimes acts as a mirror for our spiritual journey, how can we relate to it in ways that support the spiritual growth of CAC and our broader community? As part of our process of developing the philosophy, we reflected on our personal relationships to and family stories about money. This oftentimes added an important layer to the organizational conversation, centered in our mission while also deepening our understanding of each other as members of a team.

As a Franciscan priest, Fr. Richard, our founder, draws from a rich history and body of work in Catholic social teaching. We drew from that as well. We also benefited from wisdom offered by other spiritual traditions around the stewardship of financial resources and its relationship to how we care for creation and each other.

With so much to draw from and consider, one of our core conclusions was the need for processes that support ongoing, values-based discernment as part of our decision-making. For example, our recent auditor selection process considered aspects of our philosophy and resulted in a more inclusive approach, with the selection of a local, minority-owned firm we might otherwise not have considered. Given the complexity of some of the questions we were asking, we faced a humbling realization that the work we are attempting impacts more than one operational cycle and a wider network than the set of voices tasked with the responsibility to take this first step.

[continued on page 5]

Key Financial Principles

1. We operate from a clear definition of “enough.”
2. We practice transparency.
3. We seek for money to never be the barrier to participation.
4. We understand exchanges of money first and foremost as vehicles for advancing our mission and message.
5. We commit to spend simply, equitably, and sustainably.
6. We lead with giving and generosity.
movement as well as action for social justice. Our goal is to dedicate a full 10% of our budget. We are, like few other nonprofits, free from the coercion or constraints of donors and finance, thanks to years of operating with our priorities clearly in view to all who cared to study our publications. Blessedly, our donors have not run for cover over time, but only increased in numbers, continuing to join us—even from outside the usual camps of both religion and politics.

Few people enjoy such freedom of living and teaching from the edge of the inside. This is the unique position that a prophetic charism offers us and for which we are responsible. It is statistically quite rare, and therefore we must make use of it. (I think this is the only social implication to the Franciscan “vow of poverty” and our little antidote to our overly dominant capitalist society).

You are invited to join us in exactly that!

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RADICAL GRATITUDE [continued from page 2]

been any major projects for them this past year because, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CAC staff has been working remotely. However, I honor these volunteers for the huge investment of their time, talent, and treasure to the CAC, and am forever grateful to them for their good humor and laughter, even in the midst of the most demanding, time-sensitive work.

As I reflect on the blessings of my time at CAC, I think about the generosity of our many donors, whose support has made our work possible. Over the years, we have significantly grown our staff, remodeled and refreshed our old buildings on Five Points Road, purchased an additional property, updated Audio Visual and IT equipment, and established and grown several new programs, including the Living School, which have allowed CAC to reach hundreds of thousands more people.

All this has been made possible due to ongoing donor support—from a broad range of sources, including a monthly cash donation which a community of nuns has faithfully sent CAC since its inception to unexpected bequests and gifts from many other longtime friends and supporters.

How can we not be grateful?

VANESSA GUERIN is the Director of Publications for the CAC and serves as managing editor for the Mendicant. Raised in Latin America, she began her career as an artist in Washington, DC before moving to New Mexico.

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CAC’S FINANCIAL PHILOSOPHY [continued from page 4]

It bears mentioning that the “we” here encompasses a broad set of stakeholders, both internal and external to the organization, who participated in the process with us. Fr. Richard’s contributions, along with my and another key contributor’s past participation in the Living School, helped ground our work in our spiritual lineage. Ultimately, though, this work was the co-creation of the community, including voices that have forged paths and wisdom ahead of us, and for whose contributions I have the deepest gratitude. The generosity of all of those that spoke into this process still feels like a fresh gift as I write this, and the relationships formed were perhaps some of the first fruits.

At the same time, it’s clear that where we now stand as an organization is just the beginning. We have very big plans ahead. And, as someone trained as a business coach, where the primary tool is asking the right questions, the idea of finding the next right set of questions strikes me as the best place to begin to discern what comes next. Some of those next steps are clear, as we translate the core operational implications into practical, tangible policy and procedures, but there is much to consider that we don’t yet know. I hold trust that the next steps will emerge in the ways and timing that will best serve us all.

I want to express particular gratitude for each of you reading these words. By reading them, you join us on this journey, and I know that your finding them means you are meant to be on this road with us. We are grateful to be partners with you in this process of stewarding our collective resources in alignment with our spiritual lineage so that we can move forward together in a unity of spirit and purpose.

Each day, I work to honor your support—financial, spiritual, relational—and I thank you for the generous ways in which you each offer them.

CINDY KROLL joined the CAC in 2019 as the Managing Director of Finance and Business Analytics. She is a 2019 Living School sendee and has also served on CAC’s Finance Committee. Cindy lives in Bloomington, Minnesota with her two children, Kaitlyn and Evan.
To support our work, please consider 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 remember CAC in your estate plan. For more information about making a charitable contribution, including stock transfers and bequests, please email development@cac.org.

To help us make sense of personal and collective traumas, the edition features authors from various backgrounds, including the healing arts. To order, visit https://store.cac.org/

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