

**ANOTHER
NAME
FOR EVERY
THING**

with

RICHARD ROHR

Season 5, Episode 5
Love After Love

Brie Stoner: Don't cry, Paul.

Paul Swanson: Don't cry for me, Paul. I was trying to make that sound like "Don't cry for me, Argentina."

Brie Stoner: I knew immediately what you meant, but like your cadence should have been like, don't cry for me, Paul. Oh-oh.

Paul Swanson: [music] I should have tried to sell it. For you, we have reached the end of an amazing podcast journey through five seasons, two years with you, me and Richard. And it's obviously very bittersweet for us to be gathering for one final time having to do it online. And, this final episode really felt like a reflection of the journey that we've gone on. How did it hit you to sit here in our last time on Another Name for Every Thing?

Brie Stoner: Well, I'm exceptionally proud of myself for only tearing up once, because I think I've been emotional thinking about this moment for, you know, over the last several weeks as we've been recording and kind of seeing the end in sight. Yeah, goodbyes are hard. It's hard to let go of seasons with particular members of a community. And I think this journey for us has been a really special one, especially for you and I, Paul, because seeing ourselves as students of the path, students of Richard's work and being able to journey over the last two years, not just on this podcast, but as friends, and really digging into this work together, and seeing how we were trying to integrate this in our lives, asking each other the questions. I mean, in many ways, every time you and I would hop on to prep for these podcasts, it was its own kind of like podcast. And I feel so grateful that we had this opportunity to serve our community in this way. And I really enjoyed being able to go back retrospectively in this episode and talk about Season One and Season Two, and how Richard dropped Latin phrases in Season Three. [laughter]

Paul Swanson: It was kind of like going through a yearbook and it's like, remember the first year when we did this. And yeah, it was a joy to hold that space for a retrospection. And I mean, what a huge gift—I'm so grateful for you and for Richard. And I think the way that we've had the space to examine some of the most heartfelt questions for us as we seek to move deeper and deeper into wholeness and the contemplative hearts, has been a real privilege. And what a gift to share this with so many listening from home who are also doing this work in their own contexts and own locations, and that this season has hopefully provided some fodder and some guidance because I know that we've received that from the community in our own lives, and that this journey isn't over for anyone that's going to continue in just a different configuration.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. Yeah. I think that's been one of the most humbling things about being a part of this podcast is hearing from the members of our community. What

Brie Stoner: random story that you or I shared that helped bring Richard's teaching into further light, into further integration and yeah, I mean, you and I talk a lot about how we really didn't set out to become, you know, members of this conversation, as if we had something to offer. We mostly were just obsessed with Richard's teaching and wanted to talk about it and geek out about it. But, you know, I want to say Paul, you know, your vulnerability, your ability to hold space, your willingness to ask questions tenderly, I think also invited me to do the same thing. And I want to just say how grateful I am to you as a friend, but as a partner in this

project, that you so tenderly held space for these deeper questions, and that that's a marker of your character, that's how you are, that's how you are in everyday life. So, thank you for the posts that you've held on this journey and for the ways in which you made room for me to ask deeper questions and to be more vulnerable as well.

Paul Swanson: Ok. That makes me all verklepmt.

Brie Stoner: I sprung that one on you. [laughter]

Paul Swanson: You did. You did. I mean, but it's the reciprocal nature of our friendship, and I think when we're both trying to hold and bear this contemplative heart, I mean, that's a gift that goes back and forth. There's a...I know, I feel like you, to me, are the leader in that vulnerability of stepping into the places that are the unknown and seeking to bow before mystery, and to hold creativity in that space so that you can do the work that you are called to do from the stance and posture of humble love, has been a gift to me. And I know it's been a gift to Richard and to the listening community as they get the chance to get to know you as you are because that's what my favorite things like, as you are on this podcast is as you are. You're just...

Brie Stoner: Just a holy shit-show.

Paul Swanson: I was going to say you're holding that sacred heart out there, but if you want to throw down that way.

Brie Stoner: It's out there. It's out there; it's just there; it's out there in flames. Thanks, Paul. I think another thing I really appreciated about this episode was the chance to ask Richard about, you know, how he wants us to live into his legacy and his teaching and to even, you know, tenderly ask, what about when you're gone Richard? Like, how do you want us to honor you then? I thought it was really powerful to hear him reflect on, you know, just his constant humility to not make it about himself or even about the CAC, but the ways in which he's really encouraging us to live into this, and embody it in new creative ways, and to keep it going,

Paul Swanson: Yeah. That this work is bigger than the CAC; it's bigger than this podcast; it's bigger than any one institution. That this is the incarnational work of all of us, to carry the message of the universal Christ in our hearts, and our minds, and our souls as we go about our daily lives. And we're happy to be collaborators with all of you listening in this work of the universal Christ. So with that, please enjoy this final episode of Another Name for Every Thing.
[music]

Brie Stoner: Before we get started, could we pray really quick? Loving one, we're so grateful for the journey of the last two years, for the privilege of serving our broader community in this way, for Paul and I to serve Richard and his work in this way. Thank you that you are the God of new beginnings in the midst of every ending, and that you make so much more out of what we offer each other in love and offer the world in love. And we're so grateful for the depth and the meaning and the hope that you weave in and through us. We ask that you guide our words, that you allow our hearts to be present to one another. In this final episode, we are so thankful. Amen.

Paul Swanson: Amen.

Richard Rohr: Amen. Those evangelicals, they know how to pray.

Brie Stoner: [laughter] Hallelujah! Okay. So Richard, it is wild to think that we started this journey almost exactly two years ago; it was February 24th, 2019 that our first episode aired and your book had come out, and Richard, you felt pretty certain that this was going to be your last book.

Richard Rohr: I did.

Brie Stoner: We recorded this in the midst of some pretty aggressive cancer treatment. And I remember, you know, we really had no idea how much time we were going to have together with you. And we gathered in the small hermitage on the grounds of the CAC, and it was full peacock season. I don't know if you remember that; I certainly do because I had never heard sounds like that in my entire life. And we discussed the different chapters of your book, hoping that we could dive into these themes and ideas one last time together. So, I just kind of want to begin by just bringing us back to that, that first moment when we came together, and recognizing how much things have changed with your health, with all of us, and just to begin by bringing us to that point when we began.

Richard Rohr: That really [inaudible] how much can change in two years. Yeah, it feels like a different world in so many ways. Yeah. Thank you for putting that in context.

Brie Stoner: I remember on that first season, what was so helpful as we began this journey of discussing these themes from your book, *The Universal Christ*, was distinguishing between Jesus and Christ, the cozy and the cosmic as Paul would say. It was as if we finally had this framework to make sense out of how we could embrace the best out of Christianity, you know, to have Jesus as the

Brie Stoner: central reference point, but leave behind the institutional crap. Right? And have a cosmic frame for Christ in which we could appreciate and move fluidly between all faith traditions. Paul, what, what stands out for you about that first season?

Paul Swanson: It's such a rich memory to go back and think about that, those first footsteps into podcasting for the CAC. And I'm just realizing too, the bookends, right, of Richard's book coming out then and now the paperback version coming out of *The Universal Christ*; it's kind of wild that we're being held by these two bookends. But the question that comes to me to mind, Richard, when I think about that first season, is this theme that I think both Brie and I have so appreciated of the Christ-soaked world. And that was one of the first questions we asked you was, what does the Christ-soaked world mean to you? And so here we are closing out this podcast, and I want to ask that again in the midst of a pandemic, in the midst of growing consciousness in the world, and social uprisings, how would you respond to the question, what does the Christ-soaked world mean to you today?

Richard Rohr: What comes to mind today? I think it's the best way I know how to say it is that there is an inherent dignity to everything, that dignity is not applied by me, or you, or the

American constitution. It's previous to all of that. And just, once you have inherent dignity, you have to live a very different kind of life it would seem. I watched a couple of weeks on the Black church on PBS last week, or was it this week? Whenever. And I kept hearing that word come up: how Black people so feel that constantly their dignity was taken from them. What the Gospel was meant to do was to put it in there in such a way that no one could take it away. The main subterfuge we had was the good...bad behavior took it away. You see, it sounds reasonable, but then that leaves up to us the decision [of] who's operating with bad behavior and what is bad behavior. And then you see it's defined very differently from culture to culture. And it always happens to be the behavior of another group. So, remember that old schema that we learned from Ken Wilber: cleaning up, exporting dirt elsewhere, any kind of dirt, even saying pigs are dirty; don't go there. Don't go there, because once you start on that path that this is dirty and this is not dirty, it seems to never stop. So, I can't live any other way in this universe. And at this time where we landed on Mars and we're driving a little car around Mars, the big universe is becoming ever closer. And even Mars is sacred, even though it took us billions of years to get there. So, we don't administer the sacred: we uncover it; we discover it; we honor it. That gives a very different frame to religion. Very different.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. That's, that's a, that's a huge foundational shift. And I, you know, even before we started this podcast, I remember as a student in the Living School, you know, really, to be baptized into this concept of originally good, I mean, it was, it was such a radical shift for me to believe, to practice the sight that could see Christ in everything, but also in myself, even. You know, there's so much shame that we've received in a lot of unhealthy religious upbringing. And I think that shame has turned into a blame game in our politics and in our society because we are unable to see ourselves as whole; therefore, we dissect

Brie Stoner: everybody else because we're unable to accept ourselves as holy; we therefore judge and declare unholy, unworthy the bodies of others. And I'm so glad that you brought up this idea of Richard of inherent dignity.

I'm a really big fan of Donna Hicks. She's written a lot of work or a lot of her work is written about this idea of inherent dignity, of practicing dignity. And I find this to be a really compatible practice, civic practice, for those of us who are contemplatively practicing or wanting to practice these ideas of the Universal Christ. And I just can't help but think about what would our society look like if we actually believed what you just said.

Richard Rohr: If we actually believed, yeah.

Brie Stoner: If actually practiced to treat each other with that inherent dignity, what would our world look like?

Richard Rohr: What a different world. I was watching on a newscast, the recently released film that they warned us against watching on the evening news of the victims of Syrian torture: eyes got gouged out eyes, eyes gouged out, rows of little children bleeding all over. How did humanity get to this, that we could do this Syria, where...one of the

oldest places where Christianity found a foundation and it's had such little effect on so many people. It's breaks your heart. How are we going to ever get out of this inclination toward judgment and hatred, and really sadism? At least when I see that, my goodness, who would allow a human being to do that to another human being, where all dignity is withdrawn and hatred is held onto. Boy, we have our work to do.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. And I think we can really see examples of that in the past year. The ways in which contempt is, you know, the Trojan horse for violence, really; and how subtle contempt is, how it can sneak in and take root in our hearts. You know, even just with social media, it's like, "Oh, how could they say? I cannot believe these people," you know, that energy. If we're not mindful, if we're not paying attention to how that begins to feed a worldview that doesn't treat people with inherent dignity. Man, I think you're right. We end up in this sadistic, violent frame, and the justification of that violence,

Richard Rohr: You can see why we've made God a loving God, hard to believe in for so many people. Yeah.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. And this brings to mind to me of Chapter Five in the Years of Christ (18:08) of "love is the meaning." That's been a chapter that I've gone back to during this period of time. And particularly, you know, I think the way you kick it off with the Julian of Norwich quote, which I want to just read real quick and then ask you a question about it, where Jillian says, "Know it, well. Love. It's meaning, who reveals this to you? Love? What does it reveal? Love Why? For love.

Paul Swanson: Remain in this and you'll know more of the same." (18:49) So yeah, those words are just dropping your heart and expand it.

Richard Rohr: Dynamite, dynamite.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I feel like that connects to that inherent dignity of how one should approach finding meaning in life as a participant. And I'm wondering, you know. It's a very different, angle of love than, like I said, the gooey love of romantic comedies where it's all feel-good. There's... I've heard you speak lately about the hard edges of love and how love in the midst of suffering takes on a new way of being, and especially, you know, as we talk about the tragic absurdity of reality. So, I know that a lot of folks who are listening to this have read the book and are trying to find ways to practice, or looking for action on how to live with love as the meaning, from that place of inherent dignity. Do you have any practices or actions that you could recommend that folks might take to expand their own experience of love of themselves, to go out into the world and kind of further their own agency in love?

Richard Rohr: This comes to me first. I don't know that it's the best answer at all, but I think we all have to keep an eye on when we give ourselves excuse[s] not to love. And it's always her righteous answer. It's always for, well, this isn't politically correct; I can cancel this person because now my hatred, my ill will, my vengeance is justified. In fact, I have to do it to be just; I have to be unloving to be just. Hear that? This is common, today where, okay: yes, people must make amends. People must be accountable, that's all true. But when you can feel the energy of the person who is demanding, it's too often a desire to punish. And as you've heard me say before, when we made God the punisher in chief, I'm afraid it just took away the cover from

punishment. It made it appear necessary and even good; or no, I should say it, it covered it up, not took away the cover, whatever it is. I'm amazed at the human need to punish other people for what I judge is inadequate behavior, according to my recent criteria. And as you have also heard me say, that's as true on the left as on the right. Yeah.

Brie Stoner: Richard, I'm so glad that you brought this up because it seems to be the conversation that most people are swimming in and wanting to talk about right now, which is: how do we find accountability without contempt? How do we protect community? You know, how do we seek justice without that violence that's trying to cancel?

Richard Rohr: You know, the Chinese are wise enough to speak of chi, the energy. And I wonder if it isn't a major part of the growth in the spirit that you learn very quickly—no, not very quickly, but you learn soon enough to discern what the chi is in a statement. That two people can say the exact same thing and in one, the energy, let's just translate it to energy. In one, the chi is positive, is caring; the very tone of the voice will be different.

Richard Rohr: And the other one uses the same phrase, and the tone is harsh and aggressive, brooking no disagreements. That's why it's so hard to make a quick judgements or good judgements because you have go to the deeper level, what's really going on here? Is this the spirit of Christ or is this the spirit of something else? And you can feel when the love is dominant; it has a kindness to it. We'll use all of Paul's adjectives, you know: it's patient, it takes no offense. Why? Why haven't we gotten that?

Brie Stoner: I'm reminded of—good Baptist girl moment here—but I'm reminded of King Solomon, you know, the examples of just wisdom and the recognition, I think that our culture assumes that intelligence is the same thing as wisdom, and it is not. You know, and so we can be very intelligent, and have all the facts and think we know everything, but it seems to me that what you're saying, Richard, it's only a centered heart, filled with wisdom that can really discern what's happening, and then to seek justice in a way that is loving for all without canceling, you know, the quote unquote aggressor; or you know, it seems to be an entirely different consciousness in seeking justice.

Richard I wonder...I just thought of this while you were talking: I wonder if the heart can't really hold hatred, and so that's why we try to hide in the head. The head can hold hatred for years and it seems the body can too, which is what the sadist is, that their very embodiment wants to punish; but the heart, it closes down if you try bury hatred there. It's not a heart anymore; it's scoliosis or something.

Brie Stoner: That's really, I mean, that is so helpful though. And as we're sitting in the...you know, going through this journey and this episode, this retrospective—what you're talking about, about the heart, reminds me of Season Two because we got to hear directly from the hearts of so many in our community. And they were...and, you know, so many of the questions we got were wrestling with this question—maybe not this question exactly— but it was, what is non-duality in relationships and in community? How do we discern? How do we deal with healthy boundaries when we have parents who are proselytizing us? How do we decide or determine if we need to leave a relationship or a marriage? How do we know when we should stay in a community or stay on the edge of the inside of a community or leave?

And I felt like in that season, we were able to dive in together into a lot of the nitty gritty, messy, choice-making and decisions of relationships. A spiritual director once said to me that in discernment I should ask, what is the most loving thing for this person/community and myself? And I find that to be really challenging because sometimes it's really easy to think about what's the most loving thing for me. Sometimes, it's also really easy to say what's the most loving thing for them? But to find that middle ground where love is expansively touching through both. Yeah. What do you think of that, Richard?

Richard Rohr: My it's such a high bar, but it is the bar. What is the most loving thing I can do now for all concerned? Which is why you can't come to a quick resolution usually, but it might mean, as you seem to allude, when you can no longer separate yourself from the malice, from the negative energy of another person, I'm not sure it isn't the higher moral response to separate, especially if children are involved. Yeah. But we weren't told told that in the black-and-white morality most of us were raised in. And I saw too many women especially, some men too; it isn't always women, but what's always destroyed is children. To live in an energy of love, you know, ping-pong of hatred, ping-ponging back and forth in the kitchen, in the living room; every day that child is going to be raised inside of post-traumatic stress disorder, if that doesn't seem like an overstatement. Yeah, so.

How do we get people to seek love above all else when their whole heart is still filled with post-traumatic stress disorder and they're trying to get rid of it? So, you have to have sympathy for them because no one in this...follows from our first thing of inherent dignity, inherent goodness. They didn't get hateful except somehow living inside of hate energy for a period of time; they weren't born that way. They weren't born that way. And that gives us all the courage to keep loving people. What is the wound that made this person so whatever?

Brie Stoner: I think too, what's so helpful then with that in mind, Richard, is that, and we talked a lot about this on Season Two, but I'm just realizing what a crucial conversation this is, because you can have boundaries, and in fact, boundaries can be the most loving thing. And, we got so much mail from people after that season because it was the first time they had heard in dialogue from a Christian institution, talking about divorce, talking about what do we do when my parents and I don't believe the same things. And I think a lot of people found that deeply liberating that we can treat each other with that inherent dignity and learn what healthy boundaries look like. And that feels like a new way of living in and with love.

Richard Rohr: Very good. Good fences, make good neighbors. And what I'm pleased by, just in my smaller world: the amount of of separated couples I know who are still good friends, and I mean that, really good friends. I'd much rather have that negotiated then sticking together and sniping at one another all day. Yeah.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. That's a beautiful thing, I think, when folks can stay in that space and that love can be carried out in a different orientation than previously. And speaking of love, you know, Brie and I have had such a joy, and we just love questions and we love asking you questions. And within Season Two, it was really fun to have listeners get a chance to ask you questions and us questions that were stirring their hearts. And as Brie said, some of the most challenging, difficult questions in their lives, they were raising. So Richard, as someone who people

often approach for wisdom with their perplexing life questions and knowing that you're an ongoing student of life, who do you take your most perplexing questions to? Well, if we take ours to you, where do you go when you have questions that are stirring you?

Richard Rohr: Well, this is going to sound so evangelical. See, I'm not Catholic at all. I honestly, I mean, where is my Bible? It's over here on my drum, in front of my chair. At this stage of my life, I go waiting for an inspired verse and it almost always comes, almost always comes. But sometimes I have to page for a while; it isn't always the first verse I open to. Yeah, my most perplexing are the Bible and the writings of Holy people.

Paul Swanson: You're an evangelical in brown robe. [laughter]

Richard Rohr: Yeah. I know that hasn't always served everybody well, so I say it with some trepidation, but yeah, I think I'd go to the Bible now.

Brie Stoner: That's so beautiful, warms my evangelical heart, I must say, to hear that. You know, thinking back on Season Three, Season Three, I think was one of my favorite seasons because in it we explored the values that we were shaping for ourselves and our relationships. And Paul and I talked a lot about the values we wanted to pass on to our kids based on the Universal Christ. It is also, Richard, the season when you random—I'm pretty sure this was either season three or four, I can't remember—but you randomly and consistently dropped Latin phrases. You would say like, as my teacher said, Chiefy Kristin.(34:08)[inaudible] You would just pull these out.

Richard Rohr: Well, I lived in that world for so many years. Yeah

Brie Stoner: It's was awesome.

Richard Rohr: No. It's arrogant. I'm sorry.

Brie Stoner: No, no, Richard. it's not arrogant; it's awesome. And Paul and I enjoyed it so much that we talked about wanting to make t-shirts out of these Latin phrases, and then we were going to wear them around you just to see if you would notice.

Richard Rohr: Please don't please don't. I wasn't even good at Latin anyway.

Brie Stoner: Fabulous. But you know, in that season, it was the ways that you and I and Paul were talking about really desiring integration to find the ways where the values can become vows, that the ways in which they can shape our family rhythms and our relationships, that for me, really define the arc of our conversations in that season. And I especially remember two episodes that kind of stand out: "Jesus and the Empire" and the "Personal is Political" because it really landed a clear view of the necessary participation and agency not just in our personal transformation, which is how I think so many of us tend to think about contemplation, but in social transformation. And it was a real clarion call that you laid out to our broader contemplative community that I think, you know, we had all [become] a little bit entrenched in retreat, enlightenment and contemplation as brand, rather than recognizing our contemplation is lived out

Brie Stoner: in our choices for justice, for change, and for love bearing, you know, a revolutionary

creativity. So my question is Richard, from where you sit, what do you see now as the growing edge for how we think about contemplative practice in our day-to-day lives? What is the fruit that you think we should most center and look for, to see if our personal practice is bearing fruit in our world socially?

Richard Rohr: I'm going to sound like a Christian Eckhart Tolle, but it is my answer. Your ability to surrender in a heartfelt way to the present moment whatever it offers you: the irritation at the stop sign, the person who you are turned off by, the work that's asked of you that you really don't want to do. I think parents get the best practice there; it must teach you that very well. Yeah. That gives away every hour, how surrendered your heart and your soul are to God, when you can, okay, this isn't what I would have chosen, but I can still either do it or refuse it with grace. I'm not saying it means you always have to do it, but if you can't, you owe a graceful response to the petitioner. I'm sure you both do that as parents. Now, little boy, daddy can't do that; mommy can't do that right now. Can you wait a few minutes?

Yeah. It's all...the reaction to the present moment is the best possible practice I can think of, just to keep watching yourself. It's really wonderful because it, in a way, it frees you from judgmentalism and leads you more toward watchfulness, just watchfulness, awareness. Okay, Dickie—that's my warm name about myself from my parents—you're gone toward the harsh response to this moment; how about digging a little deeper and finding the warm response. And I honestly do not always succeed at that at all. And I'm just being honest; I'm not trying to appear humble. It's true. [music] You've seen my sharp and quick response. I don't think any of us can succeed at it all the time, and that's good too because then we don't get arrogant about our own supposedly perfection or superiority. We have to fail. We have to fail.

Paul Swanson: Another Name for Every Thing. We'll continue in a moment.

The chaos and uncertainty of these days have revealed that while many people see the same thing in different ways, there's one common thread: Christ is in all us even when it is hard to see. For those eager to embrace the challenge, realities and failing, to see more humbly and lovingly, Richard Rohr and Patrick Boland invite you into a deeper journey of the Universal Christ with *Everything is Sacred: forty practices and reflections on the Universal Christ*, available February 16th at cac.org/sacred.

Paul Swanson: I'm so grateful the way that we've been honing in on the personal then stretching to the corporate and the cosmic institutional kind of expansion and coming back. I want to bring up a theme that we talked a lot about that feels very resonant to this conversation in Season Three, where we talked about willfulness and willingness, and to kind of pan out to more of corporate and institutional settings. I often feel half-hearted about the possibilities of kind of radical institutional change. And I think we see this a lot in politics; we see this

Paul Swanson: a lot in corporate life where the words are there, but the will and imagination for radical change are lacking. So Richard, I'm curious of what is the role in will or willfulness in addressing institutional evil when the willingness for change feels absent?

Richard Rohr: Wow, that's good. That shows you've been in the right field, or you wouldn't ask such a question. I bet a lot of us feel that way today, that there doesn't seem to be a ready attunement to the need to change, the need to.... Everybody is so invested in their own

opinion. So, I guess it takes a little stronger will. Stronger will, however, is not the same as willfulness. Willful is there is a real opinionated pushing us, an inability to entertain the thought that I could be wrong. There's far too much of that today. And so it, it makes it easy to give up, just give up on all these hard-hearted people—as the prophets would probably say—but then I guess you have to recognize, at least I do, how inclined I am to being hard-hearted. And I really am, toward hard-hearted people. I'm very hard-hearted, but my hardheartedness is good, is deserved.

We can't overestimate how almost all of us have been raised to conflate justice with vengeance. And when those two have been put together all your life, you can hear about the renaming of justice with a title like restorative justice, but you just dig and most people are still retributive justice. Because that's the way we've used the word in most of history. Ninety-nine percent of history has used history to justify punishment, retribution, even, as you know, the cross itself. Penal. Penal means punishment, that the Father, God demanded punishment. Just hear that. That just distorted Christianity at its center. If God demands punishment, it takes us all a long time to get out of that. Forgive me if I've said some of this on previous podcasts.

Brie Stoner: I don't...no, I don't think it's ever the...I think that this is part of the gift of this work and these conversations is that it never gets old because there's always something new to hear in it. And even as I'm listening to you talk about hardheartedness and that need for punishment, I think about how we self-attack, how we punish ourselves, how we live with this constant flagellation of guilt and shame, you know, for every mistake, for every failure. And then, you know, how that then gets flipped outward. You know, how we were saying earlier, our internal shame becomes external blame. And yeah, so I'm really...I'm stunned once again to hear you say that, you know, to think about how much that has shaped us, not just within Christianity, but culturally in the West; how that worldview has led to so much violence, we have work to do. We have so much work to do to uproot that and to restore a loving paradigm, a loving worldview, an abundant, loving image of God.

Richard Rohr: It's obvious isn't it. You know in this same Black history that I was talking about, —it's Black History Month—I just saw how within a few years after the civil war, we reconstructed different ways to limit and punish and shame Black people. I mean, it wasn't three years and, okay, they're not slaves, but we're going to make sure they pay for their supposed freedom. It's just heartbreaking. And then the Jim Crow laws, and then, I mean, we're talking about the things still not

Richard Rohr: exposed fully in the sixties, although we thought it was. And now, in our lifetime, the word is white privilege. It always keeps a new nuance, a new cover, a new disguise, so I can be hateful with impunity.

Oh God must just weep. God must get so tired of it. I bet he can't wait; she can't wait to show mercy to the merciless lives so many have experienced. I watched these pictures on the series on TV and the lined-up little Black kids, little three-year-olds already slaves, little six-year-olds, little ten-year-olds standing there in their rags. You say, what mother was capable of taking on that little child as a slave? Or father, it doesn't matter. I'm really struck by the whole slave experience in this country, how it was the heart of evil, the total turning around of the Gospel, total turning around, that some were not the body of Christ, and it was

Christians who acted this way.

Brie Stoner: Still is. It still is. Yeah. What a sobering call for us now, even as we move forward, for us to ask that question. You know, where are we blind to the heart of evil now, alive in our very midst as us? You know, how am I acting into that systemic evil? Yeah. Wow.

Richard Rohr: You're so right.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. Draws me back to what you had said earlier, Richard, about the kind of self-examination of the heart and where the heart is or where the mind is limiting the heart's love, and then also reading the energy of the room, and situations, and systems. It seems like without that kind of continual discernment of spirits that one just tips in the direction of self-interest, of self-protection. And there's nothing more, no more state(49:04) an example, I think, than the system of slavery and the implications for the ongoing American experiment with structures of oppression, that I think the Universal Christ taken into the heart has the massive potential for liberation of what it actually means to be a part of the body of Christ and what that actually means for relationships, for how we serve and treat one another. And, you know, it's something that I know you've mentioned many times in the podcast of the need for lament, the need for mourning, the need for owning what our history holds because our history has not let go of us. It continues to speak into this moment. And, there's that great desire in me just to see the United States own its own history of enslavement of people, and also just the way that these structures have continued to be oppressive in that way.

Richard Rohr: The only two countries, Paul, that have ever openly, publicly, honestly, over a period of time, exposed their sin are Germany and South Africa. No other country has said "we did this and we must make amends." But that isn't the trajectory of America today, to take ownership. It's still to project more negativity onto the Black person or any person of color. Yeah, I think you're right. I mean, that's one of the Twelve Steps, isn't it? To make amends, and we're not anywhere close. I'm not talking primarily about finances. I'm talking about heartfelt public lament and apology where we need to ask for forgiveness through our leaders on a broad level. We're nowhere close to that.

Richard Rohr: Heartbreaking, really, and especially in a country that thinks it's so morally superior. I'm not trying to be anti-American; I'm just following the Twelve Steps if that'll make it easier for you to hear. If you don't remember, it is not healed. It cannot be healed. Yeah.

Paul Swanson: Those are powerful words. And to think about the power of something like the Twelve Steps or these structures that allow us to kind of create or have a North Star that we can follow. And I think in Season Four when we talked about the alternative orthodoxy, the seven themes of that and how there's a strength in having a pillars of guidance that help stabilize life in a very traumatic, absurd and chaotic world. And in that conversation that we had in Season Four, you were very generous in the ways that you made allowances for Brie and I to play with language, I think as we tried to fully grasp, and understand, and try the themes on in different ways. And I was really struck by that, how in service to that lineage, we are being...playing with the themes to see how they might be best exercised in the here and now.

And I'm curious, for you, when these are your themes that you've laid down—I know that they're a part of the Perennial Tradition, that they've been around—but that you solidify them in your own voice, and yet you are so detached from them. You're so detached from having them be a certain way. Can you share more about how you approach your work in that way, where you seem to be untethered to holding onto your work too strongly or your ideas or teachings with a strong grasp, you allow them to breathe free in the world and serve something larger? How have you cultivated that approach to your work? I think there's a lot of us who want to learn that kind of [inaudible]

Brie Stoner: How are you so damn humble, Richard?

Richard Rohr: Oh stop it.

Paul Swanson: There you go. Brie gets right to the heart of it.

Richard Rohr: Well, no. It's...I was too often wrong when I stated my opinion in any kind of absolute way, now way; it must happen now; it must be the first priority. And I was humiliated too many times by my wrongness. I think the several scares with cancer I've had in the last fifteen years always kept me with the awareness that I was near the end, near the end. When you know you're near the end that's just, I think that's the way the human mind goes. Well, it's obviously not incumbent upon me to proclaim the final truth. You know, I'm going to be gone in a few years and that whole acceptance of death allows you to accept a whole bunch of other things along with it. That the infinite patience of God, you learn to participate in it because you know that the arc of justice is slow. So it all slows down. So, I'm just babbling, but it's...I'm just babbling whatever words are coming to my mouth right now to try to understand, because I do think it's true, but it surprises me. They asked me that in Germany once almost ten years ago, "How come you don't seem to care that much about what you teach, whether we believe it or not?" I said, "do I come across that way?" And one said, "yeah,

Richard Rohr: too much. You say it and then you let go of it. You don't care about your royalties for your books and your popularity." That is all true. I'd be lying if I said differently. And yet I'm really invested in saying it, but once it's out there, I believe if it's the word of God, it will do its own work apart from me pushing it. I have no need to push it. And I don't know where that came from. I don't, because I'm still a righteous bastard underneath it all. Yeah, I really am, but in terms of my work and my message, I guess it's a knowledge that it's God's work and God's message, and that I'm just the instrument. Huh? Once you really believe that, your ego identification with it lessens considerably. Yeah. But it's, it's, it's a grace that's given to you. I didn't accomplish, achieve that grace. Yeah. Thank you for asking it so daringly. Thank you.

Brie Stoner: But it, it is so true of you, Richard, that as an instrument, because of your willingness to not become attached to that, you resonate with that grace so deeply and it's touched so many of us. You know, I, and not to be morbid in any way, but, you know, because we began this podcast at a moment when we really didn't know how long you were going to be around and, you know, you thought maybe you had months. I mean, I think because we've lost so many spiritual greats in the last couple of years, I wanted to have the chance to ask this question, to reflect on this now about how we can best honor your legacy in the future.

You've often told us at the CAC that the best way to honor you is to love what you love, to not make it about you, to allow it to carry on, to move on, to change shape. What are some of the things that you hope our community will remember and feel invited to live out in our own lives when that time comes when you are no longer with us?

Richard Rohr: That powerlessness is good and that's so counter, the present American scene: girl power, white power, Black power, boy power, which is all we've ever had, I guess. It's just something that Western civilization does not want to believe and if we give in to a search for power, economic, uh, reputational, institutional.... They said shortly before Francis died, he was riding on a donkey. He already had the stigma in his hands and his feet, and a little Italian peasant approached him on the donkey and said, "Everywhere I go, Francis, people speak very well of you. Just make sure you are who people say you are." Wow.

Brie Stoner: So powerful.

Richard Rohr: Oh God. I don't know that I am who people say I am. I don't think I am. So it's a...it's frightening.

Brie Stoner: That...but see, this is the thing that I think you're inviting us into with the teachings of the Universal Christ, which is to see the inherent dignity, to see the sacred core, but also to see the humanity. And to allow and accept that humanity with humility is to say, "yeah, I don't really...I know I don't live up to my own hype. I'm a human being." And yet, isn't that amazing still that God has used me the way that God has, you know? And that's what I see in you, Richard, so clearly in your example, in your life. But even, I remember as we sit here thinking about the last couple of years, it was two years ago that I left being an

Brie Stoner: employee at the CAC and started doing other work in Washington D.C., and I felt so torn up about leaving the nest of the CAC.

Richard Rohr: Well, we were sad to lose you. Go ahead.

Brie Stoner: I was so sad. But I remember you said to me, "No, go, because that means you're living this out, you're continuing the work." And you said to me, "Don't let the work stop here at the Center, keep going." And I think that's...

Richard Rohr: I'm glad I said that.

Brie Stoner: ...yeah, that's a powerful message, in so many ways reminiscent of how Jesus said to the disciples, go, go, live this out in your own way, embody this teaching in every corner of the world in your own way. And so what I feel like you're saying to us is don't let the CAC or the institution become the carrier or the container of this truth, but to see ourselves as being the vessels, as the instruments, and to allow the melody to continue to play in our lives, wherever we go, whatever we do.

Richard Rohr: Thank you. If we, if we've got a prop up the CAC, then I don't think it's God's work. If it's God's work, it will prop itself up by its own inherent authority. Yeah. Thank you.

Paul Swanson: I love how the message is so big; it's uncontainable by just one organization, that it has to be held by the entire body.

Richard Rohr: Yes. There you go.

Paul Swanson: As we start to close here and...I'm just curious for the two of you, how...we've been doing this podcast for five seasons; this is the fifth season. What has this this podcast meant to you? The three of us gathering to talk about the Universal Christ; to take questions from the community; to dive into your more recent works of what do we do with the Bible; and what do we do with evil; and then, the alternative orthodoxy; and then the cosmic egg, we've covered a lot of ground. But I'm curious from a kind of a personal note: how...what has this podcast meant to you these last few years?

Richard Rohr: I can honestly say, I feel so safe with both of you. I know you're not trying to... "gotcha," on the message or on me. And so, it allows me to just speak calmly and I hope clearly, which isn't usually true. I don't know that I've ever done interviews that I get so much positive feedback on the interviewers. And I'm not trying to flatter the two of you, but people just love you. I'm a little disappointed. I go out and they say, "Aren't Paul and Brie wonderful?" I say "Well, I'm wonderful too." [laughter] They just love you. And it's the energy of your voices, not just the questions who ask. They have a right mix of head and heart, it feels like, and that's what people are looking for today: the right mix of head and heart, of liberal and conservative, if you will.

Richard Rohr: So, I will remember these as very...feel like my heart was massaged a bit during this time. That's all that comes to me right now. But so much so that—I hope this doesn't hurt your feelings—that Paul would go to such lengths to make sure I got the questions ahead of time, and I don't really look at them, [laughter] I'm sorry, because I don't need to. I know they'll be intelligent, and heartfelt, and fair. I breezed through the first sentence of each paragraph this morning, but I just...I know you're going to speak well and you have spoken well. Thank you.

Brie Stoner: This...the dynamic between us, I think for me, has been a very relational illustration of the Trinity, of the way you talk about the Trinity, Richard, because, you know, as you're saying, there's so much love, and trust, and vulnerability among the three of us that—and I don't know if you guys had this experience—but I so often forget that we're even recording. And because of the love and trust that I have with the two of you, I'm able to share very vulnerably about my own questions and the kitchen floor moments that I've had in my life. Um and I think it only serves to underscore for me, Richard, this epistemology of love that you talk about, that it really is only in relationship and relating that we're able to really know; it's a different kind of knowledge because it's not from the head; it's not top down, it's not commanding; it's not didactic.

it's this way of receptivity of the heart that can just hold and resonate with, instead of needing to have an orthodoxy to grab onto. And, you've always modeled this, Richard, by saying "don't take my word for it; see if this is true in your life and in your relationships. And I think this journey for me has helped to really solidify for me how powerful relationships are as a path for deeper insight, meaning, and just to animate our desire to keep going. I mean, I think you have both held a particular post in my life that has been exceedingly precious and very special. So I just, I want to say how grateful I am that you both gave me

so much room to talk. I know we got— Richard, I don't know if you know this—but we got some mail about how much I talk.

Richard Rohr: Oh, from my sisters. It's one of the last things my sister said before she died. Who's that woman who talks so much... [laughter]

Brie Stoner: No way.

Richard Rohr: ...and talks over my dear little brother.

Brie Stoner: That is amazing. So happy that I made it [into] some final words [from] your sister.

Richard Rohr: Wasn't on her death bed, but in the last months, you know.

Brie Stoner: But in all seriousness, you know, I think... Thank you both for allowing me to express the questions of my own heart in my own, you know, long-winded rambling way. I'm so grateful to have been on this journey with the two of you, and I continue to learn from both of you so much, and I know that that learning will only carry on into the future; but I couldn't let this moment go by without saying, you know, thanks for letting a woman speak.

Richard Rohr: Well, it's been too long since we did. If we ever did.

Paul Swanson: Well. Thanks. I resonate with so much of what you both have said and the joy it's been to circle up like this, even though, Richard, you've just admitted you weren't reading our questions beforehand. We'll bear that bruise—not at all. I think the joy has been in so much of the way that the questions have naturally unfolded out of the moment, out of the prompting of the spirit. And, I'm just so grateful that we were able to have this chance to circle the Universal Christ so many times in so many different ways, not only to sharpen our own approach to living deeper into the contemplative hearts, but also to share that with a listening community who's eager to apply this, and grow, and transform in their own contexts. So yeah, I, I feel like the luckiest boy at the dance to be able to have been a part of this, and Richard, we were wondering if we close out this podcast by having you read Derek Walcott's poem, "Love After Love"

Richard Rohr: There's so many levels of truth in this poem. Each time I read it, to be honest, I'm still not sure I fully understand it, which brings me back to reading it again and again. Yeah.

Derek Walcott's poem "Love After Love"

"The time will come / when with elation / you will greet yourself arriving / at your own door, in your own mirror, and each will smile at the other's welcome." I mean, he could have stopped right there. "and say, sit here. Eat. / You will love again the stranger who was your self. / Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart / to itself, to the stranger who has loved you" I think we're supposed to imagine who is this stranger; there have be several correct answers. "all your life, whom you ignored / for another, who knows you by heart. Take down the love letters from the bookshelf, // the photographs, the desperate notes / peel your own image from the mirror," where it's stuck. "Sit, feast on your life."

Oh my goodness. That is so consoling for me. I don't even know fully why, but I hope it,

and all we've said here is consoling for you. Okay. Thank you, good souls, good hearts, good bodies, good minds. God bless you.

Paul Swanson: And that's it for today's episode of Another Name for Every Thing with Richard Rohr. This podcast is produced by the Center for Action and Contemplation, thanks to the generosity of our donors.

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