

Richard Rohr: Jim Finley is a brother in the spirit for me. We had him teach here in the earliest years of the CAC. Then he wasn't so well known. He'd gather little crowds. Now he fills stadium ... well, not stadiums, but ballrooms. He's a true mystic. He's a humble man. I consider him a deep personal friend. He calls me out of nowhere just to encourage me, just to console me when he has the intuition that I might be hurting in some way. So he lives it, but he talks in a way that none of us can talk.

He especially loves, and I think understands, the notion of infinity, the notion of eternity. And once you recognize that God's virtues are by very nature, by divine nature, infinite, you stop trying to portion it out. You can't portion out infinity. Half of infinity is still infinity. And when Jim talks about the infinite love of God, that sinks in many of the listeners who stop trying to categorize God, marginalize God, limit God. But I know that Jim, as a novice of Thomas Merton, could only talk about this so calmly and clearly because he has experienced infinite love. You can't get any better than that.

James Finley: Greetings everyone. I'm so pleased to have been invited to be part of this meditative process on the prophetic path with this emphasis on healing. And I'll begin by sharing a reflection then end with a brief prayer. The origins of the word trauma come from the Greek, meaning a wound or a source of suffering. So as human beings, we are subject to traumas great and small, that can and sometimes do occur in our lives on this earth. And when trauma does occur, when suffering occurs, then we seek to be restored to the wholeness that was lost by entering into the healing process. And that goes the way it goes in our journey through time.

But from a faith perspective, from a faith perspective, the foundations of trauma, that is where's all this trauma coming from? Where's all the suffering coming from? That the foundations of suffering of these traumatizing experiences is not found in the traumatizing things that can happen to us in our lives. Nor is the foundations of trauma found in the effects that these traumatizing effects have on us in leaving us as a traumatized person in various ways which we seek to be healed from.

From a spiritual point of view, the foundations of trauma is our traumatized capacity to live in an habitual underlying sensitivity to the upwelling of God's infinite love being poured out unexplainably and being completely given to us is God's beloved, is God's beloved, is the state of being exiled or estranged from that ever present upwelling of God's self-donating act. Pouring infinity of herself out is the gift and miracle of our very life. This is the foundation of the trauma. This is a source of our confusion, the source of our fear. And so we have our faith. And too, I would add, then that depth dimension of that traumatized state is the state of confusion and estrangement in which we act out the traumatizing things we do to ourselves and to each other. It's the symptom of an underlying deprivation of this depth dimension. And so we have our faith. This then is our faith, and our faith ...

A life of devotional sincerity is where we renew our awareness of the power of the spirit who dwells in our hearts, that God's eternal loving oneness with us is not dependent on the degree to which we realize it. Whether we realize it or not, we are the beloved, we are sustained. We are the generosity of God. We are the song God sings. But in so far as we live our faith, as we experientially ground ourselves in our faith, there's this richness of participating in this deepening sense of God's sustaining presence in our life, which is discipleship, which is discipleship.

And in order for this life of discipleship to kind of be a grounding place for our life, it requires a cultivation of a daily rendezvous with God. Because that which is essential, namely, that we are the beloved, that which is essential never imposes itself. That which is unessential is constantly imposing itself, that we're being constantly swept away by the intensity and density of life's demands. So we set aside a daily rendezvous, a kind of a quiet time, in which there is no agenda but to open our hearts to the love of God that's always with us, Merton says, beating in our very blood whether we want it to or not. And this rendezvous is a descent down into a renewed intimate awakening. And through spiritual reading, through meditation, through prayer, through silent wordless, communion, resting in God, resting in us. And this rendezvous has to be a habit. It has to be an habitual ... Because it's subtle.

And so when we end the rendezvous, we ask God not to break the thread of that awareness as we go through the day, as we go through our day. And so this deepening awareness then of this abyss-like love, welling up and giving itself to us can become an underlying habitual sensitivity as we go through our day. And while this depth dimension is ... the healing of this depth dimension deepens, it is beyond the darkness of this world. And sometimes we might be tempted to say, "I'm out of here. I'm a mystic in the making. I'm grounded in a spiritual thing." But it's to betray everything. Because what it does, it radicalizes our sensitivity to the suffering that has found its way into our mind and heart.

This is Christ. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." And so this is the Christ energy where we ... from this depth, we're called to circle back around and turn towards the hurting places in ourselves and others to touch them with love and to engage with love and to be present to it. Grounded in a peace is not dependent on the outcome of our efforts because it's the peace of God on which everything depends. And engaged in love's work, whatever that is, suffering within yourself and a loved one, society, whatever it is, when you find that the suffering is getting to you, you pause, back off and get re-grounded in the depth dimension again. That's always there. Then re-grounded in the depth dimension, you draw up from that depth, the courage and the wisdom and the sensitivity to renew, to do love's work, touching, touching, touching the hurting places this way.

And so this then is to be a healing presence in the midst of an all too often traumatized and traumatizing world. This is to be an infinitely loved broken

person, sustained by God in fellowship with the infinitely loved broken people of all of humanity like this. This is to be someone whose presence makes the world a better place to be a healing presence in the world for ourself and others. And so this is the contribution of spirituality, I think in Christ's consciousness and in the mystical traditions, the whole living school experience, the spiritual path like this, is the tradition. So I'll end then with a prayer.

Lord God, we thank you for the gift of the desire to be evermore clear and intimate in our awareness of your intimacy with us, the sustaining us breath by breath by breath by breath. We thank you for this and we thank you also for the gift of accepting the importance of pausing and devotional sincerity to open ourself to you in a wordless, quiet descent, down into the places where there's these reverberations of your sustaining love in the depths of our mind, in the depths of our body, in the depths of our feelings and so on, as subtle or delicate or as obscure as those stirrings might be.

And we thank you for the desire not to break the thread of that connectedness with you as we go through the day facing what we need to face, walking through what we need to walk through. And we are grateful also that we see how this deepening oneness with you inspires and guides and empowers us to be even more sensitive to the hurting places in ourself, in our bodies and our mind, in the people that we live with, our family, our loved one and the world. And that we're interiorly moved by your grace to reach out and touch the hurting places with love, that the suffering might dissolve in love and to continue touching the hurting places with love and until only love is left, and to be patient with this and to be childlike, and to be open and faithful to this mysterious process in which we incarnate your healing presence in the midst of our lives. And we ask for this through your son Jesus. Amen.