

Day 231 – Friday, November 6

I have always said, "There is enough pain and suffering in the world that we do not need to add to it." This is what Fr. Richard Rohr's meditation is all about today. Let us all be ambassadors of peace.

God is the ultimate nonviolent one, so we dare not accept any theory of salvation—much less socialization, economics, or politics—that is based on violence, exclusion, social pressure, or moral coercion. When we do, these are legitimated as a proper way of life. *God saves by loving and including, not by excluding or punishing.*

So what does it really mean to follow Jesus? I believe we are invited to gaze upon the image of the crucified Jesus to soften our hearts toward all suffering, to help us see how we ourselves have been “bitten” by hatred and violence, and to know that God’s heart has always been softened toward us. In turning our gaze to this divine truth, we gain compassion toward ourselves and all others who suffer. It largely happens on the psychic and unconscious level, but that is exactly where all of our hurts and our will to violence lie. A transformative religion must touch us at this primitive, brainstem level, or it is not transformative at all.

History is continually graced with *people who have been transformed in this way and somehow learned to act beyond and outside their self-interest for the good of the world.* They are exemplars of public virtue. We recall Nelson Mandela, Corazon Aquino, John Lewis, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Add to them Etty Hillesum, Corrie ten Boom, Rosa Parks, Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Óscar Romero, César Chávez, and many others. These inspiring figures gave us strong evidence that the mind of Christ still inhabits the world. Most of us are fortunate to have crossed paths with many lesser-known persons who exhibit the same presence.

Following Jesus is a vocation to share the fate of God for the life of the world.

To allow what God for some reason allows—and uses: the imperfect everything, including me!

And to suffer ever so slightly what God suffers eternally.

Often, this has little to do with believing the “right” things about God—beyond the fact that God is love itself.

Those who agree to carry and love what God loves—which is both the good and the bad—and to pay the price for its reconciliation within themselves, these are the followers of Jesus Christ. They are the leaven, the salt, the remnant, the mustard seed that God uses to transform the world.

To maintain this mind and heart over the long haul is true Gospel spirituality. I have no doubt that it takes many daily decisions and many surrenders. It is aided by seeking out like-minded people. Such grace and freedom are never lone achievements. Saints are those who wake up while in this world, instead of waiting for the next one. Francis of Assisi, William Wilberforce, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Harriet Tubman did not feel superior to anyone else; they just knew they had been let in on a big divine secret, and they wanted to do their part in revealing it to those who knew nothing about it.

“Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolate in one hand, champagne in the other, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming “WOO HOO what a ride!” (Hunter S. Thompson)

Sincerely,
Fr. Jim Kaptein