



## Richard Rohr – Day Three of a Three-Day Workshop for Spiritual Directors & Those in Training – Houchen House 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2006 Notes by Paul Fromont.

- Distractions and hard-times are a part of life; the deeper issue is *how* we respond to them.
- To be educated is to be very competent at the level of our “egoic-operating system.” This operating system relies on affirmation and denial. However it is a hindrance to the Spirit life in us. The egoic-operating system **is** needful and necessary for us to be in the world of work, relationships, study etc. What we need to learn is *how* to turn it off from time to time – to create, in the midst of life, a God-space.
- The Spirit is *nurturing* us, *shaping* us and *growing* us.
- Recommended – BOOK – *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (HarperSanFrancisco, reprinted 1993) by Catherine Lacugna,
- Trinity is the family resemblance between God and all of creation.
- God, after our best attempts will **always** remain beyond and absolutely free – free from our captivity.
- We have so demarcated the freedom of God. We’ve told God what we can and can’t do; whom God can and can’t extend welcome and grace to. We tell God who God can love and not love. We then ‘embody’ that “telling” in our relating to others, i.e. we tell God, then we enact ‘God’ over and against those we’ve deemed inappropriate for God to love etc.
- We lack the humility to let God be God. We think we have to defend God against the incursion of those we’ve deemed unacceptable.
- “The Spirit creates new capacity for relatedness.”
- “*The more that you are able to surrender to the infinite mystery that you are, the more you are able to surrender to the infinite mystery that God is. The more you are able to surrender to the infinite mystery of God the more you are able to give yourself to the mystery of personhood.*”
- Each person is a secret! Never fully contained by categories and labels. Sadly we absolutise people. We group them so that we never have to deal with the individual person that stands before me.
- Jesus consistently and **always** defines himself on the basis of relationship, e.g. the Father and I are one. Jesus is relational first and foremost.
- Philippians 2 – Jesus is **self-emptying** (*kenosis*). This is **all** we are trying to do in contemplation. We’re letting go of our *ego* or self-identity in order to more deeply live out of our true selves – the person that God loves and sees us as.
- The resurrected self is the *true* self in God.
- In contemplation we are giving ourselves over to the “flow” of the Spirit in us.
- We, as human-beings, are the forms that reveal the formless, the invisible God.

- God isn't tied to our either/or binary categories.
- So often (as testified to in the OT & NT) God is found in the exceptions; those outside of *our* boundaries, and beyond *our* exclusions.
- Re-imaging is necessary in order to re-shape consciousness.
- “The master idea of Christianity is in-coherence” or inter-being – Charles Williams. We are not holy in an isolated individual sense. We are holy etc in our being in God in Christ. **We are being formed in our being with others.**
- Praising yourself or hating yourself is simply an ego-trip.
- Original sin is the passing on of an *unlived life*; a life **not** fully lived; a life not lived humanly, alively and freely. Original sin is a diminished life and diminished living. We are all wounded. We are all un-whole (even when we don't recognise it). Original sin is at the heart of a spirituality of imperfection.
- We are not perfected in our isolation – in our being unrelated and apart from others. We are perfected and made whole in and through relationships.
- God is a “circle-dance” (*perichoresis*).
- In our entering into the Trinity we are not introducing a fourth person into the Trinity. We are *in* the Trinity in Christ. We are the body of Christ within the “circle dance” of the Trinity.
- There is only one manifestation of God's creation that resists its identity – it's us – human beings created to image God! A tree, for example, will only every be a tree, a cow a cow etc. Both are contented in a way that we are not.
- “The substitutionary atonement is not trinitarian.”
- Sometimes it is needful to leave the church until we can come back into it as an ‘adult’ (in terms of maturity).
- To live outside of the Trinity is hell. It is to live outside of our source, outside of our deepest and truest self.
- The *first-stage* of suffering is letting go of who you have created yourself to be. The *second-stage* of suffering is to find oneself being opposed by the systems, the illusions, the “powers,” institutions and persons within institutions (e.g. the church). They are against you (more often than not) because of the critique that you embody from within these ‘places.’ It is the suffering of self-doubt, of aloneness etc.
- Martyrs for the gospel don't often have the church behind them, cheering them on...
- Prayer is something we participate **in**.
- The root of mystery is that which is unspeakable – there are no words.
- “Protestantism is largely concerned with the “head”, with words.”
- “The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or they will be nothing at all” (Karl Rahner).
- When you are in union with God you love what God loves. You have a compassion for the world as God does.
- Healing from Jesus has to do with a complete reorientation of the whole person. He gives people back their humanity, their dignity etc. It involves a total realignment of the person within the community and within their sense of self and identity. They are re-included at some level in the divine dance.

- Recommended – BOOK – *Scotus for Dunces: An Introduction to the Subtle Doctor* (Franciscan Institute, 2003).
- The Trinity is both the maintaining of autonomy **and** being there for the other.
- As Ministers “you have every right to put up *appropriate* boundaries so that the institution of the Church doesn’t dehumanise you. You have every right to maintain your autonomy in the face of the encroachment of the institution. It’s needful to protect your deepest or true self.
- “In any sermon pay your dues to the majority, but be sure, in the middle of your sermon to tease out other ways of both entering into the text, together with extending an invitation to live into the implications. The “interlude”, like a parable ‘sneaks’ up on hearers offering them “more”, while at the same time challenging ingrained ways of hearing particular texts etc.
- The best thing you can do for your church is to ensure that you continue growing. You can lead people only as far as you’ve gone.
- The male is naturally orientated toward “ascent” (career – “climbing the corporate ladder”, success and the ‘rewards’ of success etc) rather than decent (‘self-emptying’). For woman their experience is often the opposite, and has more to do with “descent.” Jesus **lifts** them up, whereas with men, Jesus often invites them to descent (e.g. Zaacheus came *down* from the tree). Notice also, St. Paul, who fell *down* from his horse).
- The woman caught in adultery is **scape-goated** by patriarchy.
- In the second half of life we live in what Thomas Merton calls the “belly of the whale.”
- Those in the second half of life are both strong & soft; they’re flexible, able to adjust; they’re manoeuvrable. They are easy to be with (you aren’t going to get clobbered; given no space to talk etc). They hold things lightly. They’re patient. They’re spacious and safe to be around. They create space for genuine dialogue and conversation. They are good listeners. They tend to talk less. They don’t fill vacuums with words – they’re comfortable just to sit.
- The early or first stages of a reformation are often over-statements.
- Most Catholic saints are first half of life saints.
- Most of the major teachings of Jesus can only be truly appreciated and understood by those in the second-half of life. You can’t force it onto first half of lifers; they simply turn it into legalisms and doctrines.
- People in the first half of life are **not** bad people; they’re just in a different place – they’re **good** people simply in the first half of life.
- In terms of church the tension is always around how to hold, protect and nourish the whole without getting pulled in the direction of personal interests and agenda’s.
- People need “mediating institutions or groups” that bridge the gap between the individual and the church.
- Thinking about Day 2, I was reminded of the following quote from the novel, **The Colour Purple** by Alice Walker: “*Here’s the thing says Shug. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifest itself even if you are not looking, or*

*don't know what you're looking for. Trouble do[oes] it for most folks, I think. Sorrow, lord'* (page 177)