Home Retreat: ‘One Truth’ A Talk by Richard Rohr to WCCM 20.07.24

O God, come to my assistance – O Lord, make haste to help me. In this talk, Richard encourages and thanks the members of the World Community of Meditation for the gift they are bringing to our church, our countries, our world, and our history at this time. The gift is the experience of Christian Meditation, in which the meditator comes to the Truth of their own being before God. In that Truth, they are free. Indeed, **we** are free because we can all come to that experience through our being. Richard illustrates this with a story.

Every April in Santa Fe, there is a marvellous conference on ‘Science, Consciousness, and Religion.’ There are about four major scientists speaking each day. It was just like the best retreat I ever made. Anyway, it wasn’t priests, lecturers, or theologians speaking to me but scientists, who we used to think were the enemies of religion, as you know. But they are becoming our best friends and speak truth much better than many of us trained in theology do. They have this wonderful ability to show there is one world, one truth. Maybe they have come to it through their own thinking, but we’re coming to that same truth through our being. It levels the playing field. We do not have to be smart; we do not have to have two PhDs. We just have to be present. Richard then speaks of a Jewish scientist who was speaking. “He told me something I had never been told in all my studies of the Hebrew Scriptures. He pointed out the word that was unspeakable to the Jewish people – ‘Yahweh,’ the name for God. You know, in Hebrew the vowels are not printed, just the consonants, YHWH; you fill in the vowels. But the word was not only unspeakable because just the consonants were used in the spelling. He took it one step further. He pointed out that even the consonants used in the word Yahweh are, in his opinion, the only Hebrew consonants that do not allow you to close your lips. He just stood there in front of us: ‘Y a h w e h, Y a h w e h, Y a h w e h, Y a h w e h.’ Many people were in tears (he went on much longer than I just did) to recognise what the great teachers of meditation have been teaching us, that they knew this God could not be captured in any form of words and don’t you dare try to close your lips around it and think you have it. The identification (of this word) was with the very intake and exhalation of breath. And the word they came up with for God, the great ‘I Am,’ was the breath itself -- the great Mystery.

GOD is always beyond us, yet totally around us, within us, and outside of us, and we’re all sharing in that same air and in that same breath. It is that one thing that you and I have done since the first moment we came out of our mother’s womb; and there will come that moment when we will do it for the last time. But in between, you and I, are just doing it today and every day, taking in that universal air, exhaling that universal air, the one air, the only air, the totally accessible one, the totally given one, who never holds the God-self back but just waits to be received, waits to be taken in.

Richard congratulates the wonderful people who have committed themselves, as John Main says, to the poverty of a single word (the poverty of a word that is hardly a word at all because it can’t be spoken, it can only be experienced). So he thanks the meditators for the gift they are giving to our Church because Richard believes, in the 35 years he has spoken to most of the major renewal movements in the churches, that what they are saying is the most foundational, transformative naming of the problem and naming of the mystery of any renewal attempt he can imagine. Because they are moving beyond forms to substance, beyond any attachment to forms, infatuation with forms, defending of forms, proving of forms, and going back to the poverty of a single word. How can anybody fight them? How can they call them heretics? They make it too simple. They make it too clean. They make it too honest. They make it too truthful.

For years, we’ve quoted John’s gospel where Jesus said, “the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32), and we’ve also learned that that line might well be better translated. When you think of truth, you think of something philosophical and theological and out there. What he’d like to offer you is that what you are already doing is recognising that honesty will set you free. That, I believe.

All this sometimes highfalutin search for truth! Where Richard sees people come to truth, people are absolutely honest. Honest, just honest. He has met a lot of holy people in his life, and they are always honest about what is happening. No pretence, no thinking they are more than they are: ‘I am who I am, who I am, who I am. He has met himself naked underneath his clothes, and that is enough.’ That’s what God loves. That’s the self that you are going after. That’s the self you are really needing. You will never feel enough. You will never feel like something great and glorious that you can prove to anybody else. But it is a place where you can rest. And it is a place where you can breathe. And it is a place where you can breathe free. And that is all that anybody really wants.

Richard thanks you for offering it to our age, to our history, to our country, and to our churches. Thank you.

There are two interesting resources by Jewish authors, which say something of what Richard is saying. See: <https://sinaiandsynapses.org/content/why-can-judaism-embrace-science-so-easily/> and

 <https://chrislacy1990.medium.com/yhwh-his-breath-in-our-lungs-21c2bc60571b#:~:text=Scholars%20and%20rabbis%20say%20the,too%20heavy%20for%20mere%20words>.

I also offer this clip from the. Veritas Forum <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8XmXSMxXHQ> and final this from Richard Rohr: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAvkORdXj_s>