

MANNA *in the wilderness*

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The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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Becoming the Light We are Born to Be

by Julia Occhiogrosso

This morning out in the garden, I was moved to witness the sunflowers turning toward the morning sunlight. For a moment I felt an interior resonance and recognized my deepest yearnings to turn toward the Light and bask in the divine love that flows from it.

In these times of division and hatred we are witnessing the devastating consequences of dualistic mind or us/them thinking. We are turning our backs away from the flow and energy of the Light and the greatest transformative power – Love.

My early attraction to the Catholic Worker life was inspired by their insistence on taking to heart and attempting to live by Jesus's mandate: "I give you a new commandment: Love one another. And you are to love one another as I have loved you." (John 13-34). This was the perfect lure to hook my twenty-five year old naïve and idealistic heart. But, it did not take long for me to stumble on this path.

As a novice Catholic Worker, I was also radically committed to the "beliefs and values" of the Catholic Worker that help form and give foundation to our mission. Founding the Las Vegas Catholic Worker, I felt a strong sense of responsibility to be the enforcer of these principles. I was determined to hold the line on "voluntary poverty." My husband Gary reminds me that when he came to visit me in the 1980s, I opposed his offer to go to the local food mart to purchase a fifty-cent soup bone for our dinner. We might shop for supplies for our ministry, but when it came to *our* meals we were committed to dumpster diving and donations.

The "crockpot incident" became a wake-up call. Within the first year of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker, we were joined by a retired social worker who was familiar with the Catholic Worker mission. After a few phone conversations to convey the expectations and rules of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker, she trekked out in her Toyota to join me. The two of us, me the 25-year-old Christian revolutionary and her, the newly ordained AARP member, together would herald this radical call.

My first shock was the makeup, polished finger nails and high heels. But then, I assured myself that even though this might not look like the typical Catholic Worker fashion of t-shirt, sneakers and patched

jeans, I was not going to judge a book by its cover. Indeed, we managed to do the work together and shared many laughs along the way.

That is, until I returned from a weekend getaway to find that opulence had set in. Its extravagance roiled me. The luxury infuriated me. In a flurry of histrionics, I rattled off a litany of objections at the lavishness of this crockpot that had taken up residence on our austere kitchen counter.

After the storm of emotions subsided, regrets and remorse followed. I had grown to have affection for this courageous



PHOTO BY JULIA OCCHIOGROSSO

woman who sacrificed the comforts of retirement and ventured into the precarious life of community and service to the poor. This did not feel right. I realized that I would have to learn how to reconcile a way to uphold these values without compromising the greatest of these — to love. This was a touchstone moment: realizing that rigid adherence to beliefs gets in the way of maintaining good relationships within the community of supporters.

Needless to say, this was the first in many lessons in love. Once we set on a path that aspires to give expression to the utopian Christian lifestyle, we quickly come to know our limitations and seeming failures. I understand clearly why Dorothy Day often invoked a quote from Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*: "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams and books."

Drawing from the tradition of the early Christians, the Catholic Worker charism is to see the Christ in everyone. Demanding and disrespectful guests can make this a

challenge. How do you love the one who steals, deceives or is aggressive? Even harder perhaps than loving the stranger is the expectation to love those we know — the community and family that are closest to us. These relationships, filled with emotional baggage, daily exchanges and projections require many ego deaths for love to prevail.

Practicing this love holds at its core the recognition of the sacredness and the woundedness in ourselves and in the other. All of creation originated from a Great Love. Created in the image and likeness of the Creator, our humanity and divinity

cannot be separated.

This is surely not a sentimental endeavor. Jesus' embodiment of the reality of love led to his crucifixion. The crucifixion is a supreme model of self-emptying love which Christians are challenged to embrace.

The Christ love is not meant to be limited to those who can reciprocate. It is an expansive, infinite love that includes the stranger, the "enemy," the refugee and the outcast. The flow of this love is interrupted when we allow fear and protection of our "small-self" or ego to impede our innate capacity to love. This is why it comes more easily to show love in the particular moment to those who we are bonded to or who are like ourselves. This flow of loving relationship is safe, less complicated and has an emotional reward.

The task before us is to cultivate practices both spiritual and corporal that begin to heal the fear wound. Without this, the potential of inclusive divine love is compromised. Hatred, violence and injustice fill the void where love has gone missing.

When we come to intergrate, accept and be at peace with this eternal rhythm, our fears can begin to subside. As fears diminish, a space opens in the paralyzed heart where love can move. No longer captive, we can love like God loves, and become the Light we are born to be for the world.

Diversity Protected

by Fr. Richard Rohr, o.f.m.

White-dominant culture has been alive and well for centuries, and its grasp for power is only growing more desperate. Today we see unabashed racism, classism, and sexism at the highest levels of the United States government. How naïve many of us were to think we lived in a post-racial society after the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s and after we saw an African American president and his family in the White House. Now our collective shadow has again come out in the open for all to see.

It seems every generation must be newly converted. While we seek to transform individual hearts and minds we must also work to create change throughout systems. Until a full vision of equity is realized, we must continue naming and resisting the ways in which so many people are excluded and oppressed. Author and activist adrienne maree brown writes:

“Separation weakens. It is the main way we are kept (and keep each other) in conditions of oppression. . . . Where we are born into privilege, we are charged with dismantling any myth of supremacy. Where we are born into struggle, we are charged with claiming our dignity, joy and liberation. . . . From that deep place of belonging to ourselves, we can understand that we are inherently worthy of each other. Even when we make mistakes, harm each other, lose our way, we are worthy.” [1]

I believe the problem of otherness and separation is so foundational to all of reality that it had to be overcome in the very nature of God—from the very beginning—and in all things created in the image of God, which

is exactly all things. God has to include otherness—diversity, if you will—but God also has to be diversity overcome and resolved, first inside of the Deity Itself (the Trinity), and then in all those created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27), who are imprinted, marked, and “turned into the image that they reflect” (see 2 Corinthians 3:18).

The members of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are the Christian placeholder names for clear distinction, pluriformity, and otherness. You can use other words if you want; what’s important is distinction and diversity in loving relationship. The three must be maintained as three and understood as different from one another. Yet the infinite trust and flow between them is so constant, so reliable, so true, and so faithful that they are also completely one. They must be diverse, and they must be one—at the same time. The glue that preserves both truths at the same time is Infinite Love.

Our basic human problem of unity and diversity has been resolved in the very nature of God, but unless we allow ourselves inside of that Infinite flow, we ourselves will always remain the three but never the one. If we remain exclusive monotheists, like Judaism, Islam, and much of Christianity up to now, we normally try to impose a false uniformity on others but rarely know how to love, honor, and respect diversity. We remain in competing tribes and colonies.

Like the Godself, we must be both “three and one,” different and united: diversity affirmed, protected, and overcome by One Shared Love. Even the very basic element of the atom appears to mirror such cyclical diversity, attraction, and allurements—within itself.

[1] brown, adrienne maree. “Report: Recommendations for Us Right Now from a Future.” *Sublevel Magazine*, 2018, Issue 2

Adapted from Rohr, Richard. Introduction. *Oneing: Unity and Diversity*. By Rohr, et. al. Albuquerque: CAC Publishing, 2018. Vol. 6, No. 2, 14-15.

Daily Meditations by Richard Rohr are offered freely at cac.org

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Soup Line Closed:

August 7 - 17, 2019

November 28 - 30, 2019

January 1 - 4, 2020

Love Your Enemy

by Robert Majors

Love your enemy

What does that mean

That maybe your foe

Is not what you think

Or maybe that hate

Is what you perceive

What you have learned

Or What you have seen

That something to love

Is just what you need

And just what a friend

May need to believe

That they are much more

Than the poor and the weak

Than the color of skin

Or the scars on their knees

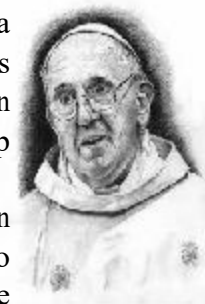
Than the war that they fight

Or ideals they seek

That they too can be loved

And in love they can be

“The way in which a nation welcomes migrants reveals its vision of human dignity and its relationship with humanity.”



He urged that a person or a family, forced to leave their own land, be welcomed with humanity. In this regard he repeated his 4-verb formula of how to receive a migrant, namely: welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating.

While stressing that the migrant is not a threat to the culture, customs and values of the host nation, the migrant also has a duty to integrate into the receiving nation, enriching the host while maintaining their identity.

In May 2019, Pope Francis addressed some 50 members of the Vatican’s Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, who were discussing the theme, “Nation, State, Nation-State.” (Excerpted from Vatican News, vaticannews.va).

Empty Bowl Benefit

Over \$21,000 was raised this year for our ministry to feed the homeless and poor.

Thank you to all participants!

PLEASE JOIN US:

Wed.-Sat., 6:00 a.m.:

Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.

Wed.-Sat., 6:30 a.m.:

Breakfast served to 175-250 poor & homeless people.

Wed., 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.:

Hospitality Day, we invite 20 homeless men home for showers, to wash clothes and for a great lunch.

Thurs., 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.:

Vigil for Peace: Thursdays in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 Las Vegas Blvd. S.

Thursday, 10:30 a.m.:

50 lunches taken to the homeless.

Second Sat. of the month:

Knights of Columbus Pancake

Breakfast for the homeless.

Third Sat. of the month:

Deliver food boxes to homes in need.