

ORDER, DISORDER, RE-ORDER

RE-ORDER/RESURRECTION

We complete the Cycle of Order, Disorder and Re-Order by a measure of Transformation. I say 'measure', because there seem to be many of these cycles in our lives, and it is difficult to discern when the series is complete and we are totally Transformed. The Saints must be close to it, but the Church sometimes takes an inordinate amount of time to declare a person a Saint, and this may indicate a measure of doubt as to whether the process of transformation is finished. The question for us in this talk, is: How do we Re-Order, how are we Transformed?

I would like to say at the start, that we do not transform ourselves. It needs another agent, and this agent, in Catholic Christian terms, is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been our constant guide and companion throughout our lives, but we reach a level of humility after our experiences of Disorder, to realise and acknowledge the Spirit's presence. This is one reason that I feel that this journey, the second-half of life journey, is a Spiritual one. However, it is worth saying that there is plenty for us to be doing in preparation for this journey. We do not simply sit around waiting for it to begin. How do we prepare?

The first thing I believe we should do, is reflect and learn from the 'crash' or Crisis, whatever form it took. If we learn nothing, we will not move on. And the first thing to learn is that we, in some way or other, were part of the crash, crisis, fall or disorder. If the ego-self has in some way been brought low, then in some way it was over-inflated. If we can admit this, aware that this is a form of death to self, then we have started on the ladder of humility, which is a crucial step in our further growth.

I remember several occasions when I had to learn a bit of humility in the monastery, especially in the early days. Very early on, I felt I had lost my faith, which was embarrassing for someone professing to be a Religious. I had to admit this to a more senior monk, who listened patiently to my doubts, until I realised, slowly, that I needed to take responsibility for what I believed, and not just depend on the authority of parents and priests. A second lesson was learned when I was doing too much, having returned from Sant Anselmo, and had something of a breakdown, based on an auto-immune reaction, which showed me I couldn't do everything. These were minor lessons, which I heeded, but they did not bring me to a complete halt. The lessons I learned when I left Zimbabwe are so many and so complex and some so personal that I will not bore you with the details, but I felt I had shifted to another level of consciousness. Although I came back to continue work at Ampleforth, I became aware, deep down, that things were different and I was not simply re-establishing a new Order. I imagine some of you have been through that sort of experience; marital breakdown, redundancy, loss of a loved one, criminal accusations. There are numerous possibilities. What may be common to all of us who feel on the other side of a disordered existence, is that we have been 'through' it, rather than round, over, or under it, or are living in denial of it. The experience itself begins a change in us. We may recall that Jesus, after the Resurrection, was not recognised so easily. A change had taken place, in Him and also in his Disciples.

From this lowest place, we are 'led' by the Spirit, by diverse paths. My own path led me to greater self-knowledge through a series of Retreats I had to prepare for the Hospitality department. Later, I was asked to be Novice Master, and that taught me more, than perhaps I taught the Novices. It was certainly a challenge to my own monastic life, to help three young

men to discern their monastic vocations. Human Development had never been part of my novitiate studies, but it was now integral to the studies of a 21st Century Novice. This is part of Spiritual Development also, and the Desert Fathers and Mothers of earlier centuries, though not having the language of psychology that we have, were often wise discerners of the Truth, in particular about themselves.

One useful set of images used by Richard Rohr, in his section on Re-order, are the three Domes, which he calls My Story, Our Story and The Story. The smallest dome, containing My Story, can be expanded through self-knowledge, by expressing the truth about myself, and trying to hold the paradox of my True Self and my Shadow Self in balance. My Shadow is all the aspects of myself which I have not developed, either for the sake of belonging to a specific culture, or because they were contrary to a religious code, or because I was fearful of developing that side of myself. Our Story, is the next level of meaning and concerns the group or groups to which we belong. This is the necessary training ground for belonging, attaching, trusting, and loving. Sadly, some spend their whole lives stuck in Our Story, defending the boundaries and glorifying their small group – School, Church, Company, ethnic group or Country. Finally, THE Story is the largest dome of meaning, the realm of universal meaning and the patterns that are always true in every culture. This level assures and insures the other two. It holds them together in sacred meaning. In fact, we could say that the more numerous the opposites we can hold together, the greater soul we usually have. Biblical religion, at its best, honours and combines all three levels: personal journey as raw material, communal identity as school and training ground, and an encounter with true transcendence as the integration and gathering place for all the parts together. True Transcendence frees us from the tyranny of *I am* in My Story and the idolatry of *We are* in Our Story. Still, when all three are taken seriously, as the Bible does very well, we have fullness of life—fully human and fully divine. If we hope for societal reconstruction, it will come from people *who can see reality at all three levels simultaneously*, honouring the divine level and ultimately living inside of THE great story line.

One common experience which will come to us all, is the experience of Death, which could be classed as the final cycle of Order, Disorder and Reorder, for each of us. How long we can conclude that ‘Order’ reigns, or ‘Disorder’ lasts will surely vary in every person’s story and perception. What form Reorder takes, has only been hinted at, and has been open to much speculation, depending on the era, the culture and belief in Spiritual realities. But if the cycle of Order, Disorder and Reorder is a pattern of life, we have already experienced a number of mini-deaths before the last appears on the horizon. One which we can all relate to, was the mini-death of leaving school for the last time, when we moved from the relative Order of school life to the apparent Disorder of the life of Work, Family and Personal Development, before Reorder began to take shape, which became our own form of Order. And here we are now at the last of these cycles – as far as we know.

In a recent webinar in which I took part, Eamon Duffy referred to Death as the ultimate sacrament of Alienation, where the absolute aloneness and desolation of the dying Christ on the Cross, is the revelation of the state of all humanity apart from Grace. Going through that Disorder, we discover the NT Resurrection appearances and Pentecost itself, which are all concerned with the rebuilding of Community in Grace. In other words, if we accept and assimilate the life we have lived on earth as the Order we leave behind, and then let go of it. If we accept and assimilate the dreadful Disorder of Alienation in Death, then we break through into the light of Communion with God and the Blessed, in Faith, which would seem to be the Reorder, or the meaning of Resurrection. If we are familiar with God in a relationship of prayer,

if we have experienced mini-deaths and if we are familiar with some experience of communion with our fellow human beings, then we may even long for this final death, however intense and painful, so that we may arrive in some expanded and beatific experience of Communion.

A few years ago, I attended the funeral of a friend, whom I had met in South Africa – a nun of the Order of the Holy Paraclete, called Sr Maureen, whose Mother House was in Whitby. She had contracted cancer and had come home to Whitby to be with her sisters before she died. She wrote a most moving Testament, which was full of Thanksgiving, for experiences in Africa, for relationships with African homeless people, with Bishops and clergy, with family and sisters and helpers in Africa, to her community in Whitby. She gave thanks for all she had learnt and all whom she loved, and at the end, she was ready, to meet her God and all who had gone before her. I include a recording of that Testament among the resources at the end.

Thank you for listening and for taking part in this retreat. I look forward to seeing you in person next year perhaps, when we no longer have to meet virtually. God bless you all.



Reflection Questions:

1. Reflect upon at least two situations in your life when you have felt helpless to do anything. What happened next?
2. Have you ever felt a shift in consciousness, or level of being, when the horizon looked different? What have you done with that opportunity?
3. As Christians we are encouraged to see Death as a gateway to eternal life. What do you really think and feel about your own inevitable death? What is involved?
4. We have just experienced Holy Week and the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. What does it all mean to you at this moment?

HOME RETREAT – REORDER/RESURRECTION- 10TH APRIL 2021

Suggested Timetable (But do make your own)

11.00	Talk – Reorder/Resurrection
11.30	Read through the talk again.
11.45	Coffee break
12.00 – 13.00	Look at Questions 1 & 2 - Read Richard Rohr's Meditations
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 – 16.00	Siesta/Leisure/Gardening
16.00	Tea break
16.15 – 18.00	Answer Questions 3 & 4. Listen to Sr Maureen's Testament
18.00	Vespers Live stream from the Abbey

18.30 Supper break
20.15 Compline Live stream from the Abbey

From Richard Rohr's Meditations

Order, Disorder, Reorder: Part Three

Reorder: The Promised Land Sunday, August 23, 2020

Our recent Daily Meditations have been focusing on what seems to me a universal pattern of spiritual transformation that takes us from *Order*, through *Disorder*, to *Reorder*. *Order*, by itself, normally wants to eliminate any disorder or diversity, creating a narrow and cognitive rigidity in both people and systems. *Disorder*, by itself, closes us off from any primal union, meaning, and eventually even sanity in both people and systems. Our focus of this week is *Reorder*, or transformation of people and systems, which happens when both are seen to work together.

Like most other kinds of growth, this spiral probably happens over and over throughout our lives, and reveals itself in the Bible:

Garden of Eden —> Fall —> Paradise.

Walter Brueggemann teaches three kinds of Psalms: Psalms of Orientation —> Psalms of Disorientation —> Psalms of New Orientation. [1]

Christians call the pattern Life —> Crucifixion —> Resurrection.

Many now speak generally of Construction —> Deconstruction —> Reconstruction.

We are indeed “saved” by knowing and surrendering to this universal pattern of reality. Knowing the full pattern allows us to let go of the first order, accept the disorder, and, sometimes hardest of all—to trust the new reorder.

Every religion in its own way is talking about getting us to the reorder stage. Various systems would call it “enlightenment,” “paradise,” “nirvana,” “heaven,” “salvation,” “springtime,” or even “resurrection.” It is the life on the other side of death, the victory on the other side of failure, the joy on the other side of birthing pains. It is an insistence on going *through*—not *under, over, or around*. There is no nonstop flight to reorder. To arrive there, we must endure, learn from, and include the *Disorder* stage, transcending the first naïve *Order*—*but also still including it!* It amounts to the best of the conservative and the best of the liberal positions. People who have reached this stage, like the Jewish prophets, might be called “radical traditionalists.” They love their truth and their group enough to critique it; and they critique it enough to maintain their own integrity and intelligence. These wise ones have stopped overreacting but also overdefending. They are usually a minority of humans.

Based on years of spiritual direction, I have observed that conservatives must let go of their illusion that they can order and control the world through religion, money, war, or politics. True release of control to God will show itself as compassion and generosity, and less boundary keeping. Liberals, however, must surrender their scepticism of leadership, eldering, or authority,

and find what is good, healthy, and deeply true about a foundational order. This will normally be experienced as a move toward humility and real community.

References:

[1] Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Fortress: 2002), 9–11.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *The Wisdom Pattern* (Franciscan Media: 2020), xiii–xv; and

The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For, and Believe (Convergent Books: 2019), 245–246.

Order, Disorder, Reorder: Part Three

The Ability to Hold Paradox

Monday, August 24, 2020

Beyond rational and critical thinking, we need to be called again. This can lead to the discovery of a “second naïveté,” which is a return to the joy of our first naïveté, but now totally new, inclusive, and mature thinking. — Paul Ricœur (1913–2005)

People are so afraid of being considered pre-rational that they avoid and deny the very possibility of the transrational. Others substitute mere pre-rational emotions for authentic religious experience, which is always transrational. —Ken Wilber

These two epigraphs are not precise quotations; they’re summaries drawn from my reflections on two great thinkers who more or less describe for me what happened on my own spiritual and intellectual journey. I began as a very conservative pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic, living in 1940’s and 1950’s Kansas, pious and law abiding, buffered and bounded by my parents’ stable marriage and many lovely liturgical traditions that sanctified my time and space. This was my first wonderful simplicity or period of *Order*. I was a very happy child and young man, and all who knew me then would agree.

Yet, I grew in my experience and was gradually educated in a much larger world of the 1960s and 1970s, with degrees in philosophy and theology, and a broad liberal arts education given me by the Franciscans. That education was the second journey into rational complexity and critical thinking. I had to leave the garden, just as Adam and Eve had to do (Genesis 3:23–24), even though my new Scripture awareness made it obvious that Adam and Eve were probably not historical figures, but important archetypal symbols. Darn it! I was heady with knowledge and “enlightenment” and was surely not in Kansas anymore. I had passed, like Dorothy, “over the rainbow.” It is sad and disconcerting for a while outside the garden, and some lovely innocence dies in this time of *Disorder*. Many will not go there, precisely because it is a loss of seeming “innocence”—things learned at our “Mother’s knee,” as it were.

As time passed, I became simultaneously very traditional and very progressive, and I have probably continued to be so to this day. I found a much larger and even happier garden (note the new garden described at the end of the Bible in Revelation 21!). I fully believe in Adam and Eve now, but on about ten more levels. (*Literalism is usually the lowest and least level of meaning.*) I no longer fit in with either staunch liberals or strict conservatives. This was my first strong introduction to paradox, and it honed my ability to hold two seemingly opposite positions at the same time. It took most of midlife to figure out what had happened—and how and why it *had* to happen.

This “pilgrim’s progress” was, for me, sequential, natural, and organic as the circles widened, and as I taught in more and more countries. While the solid ground of the perennial tradition [1] never really shifted; I found that the lens, the criteria, the inner space, and the scope continued to expand. I was always being moved toward greater differentiation and larger viewpoints, and simultaneously toward a greater inclusivity in my ideas, a deeper understanding of people, and a more honest sense of justice. God always became bigger and led me to bigger places.

References:

[1] The Perennial Tradition includes the constant themes and truths that recur in all world religions and philosophies at their most mature and deep levels. For key points, see <https://cac.org/living-school/program-details/the-perennial-tradition/>

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (Jossey-Bass: 2011), 105–107.

Order, Disorder, Reorder: Part Three

The Wisdom Within

Tuesday, August 25, 2020

Author Valarie Kaur is a Sikh activist and civil rights lawyer who writes about social change through the metaphor of childbirth—both acts of “revolutionary love.” In her words I find a powerful description of contemplation and action, of how we endure the pain of Disorder until we find the courage and grace to enter Reorder. We listen and act, rest and respond, until our work is informed by deeper wisdom.

The final stage of birthing labour is the most dangerous stage, and the most painful. . . . The medical term is “transition.” Transition *feels like dying* but it is the stage that precedes the birth of new life. After my labour, I began to think about transition as a metaphor for the most difficult fiery moments in our lives. In all our various creative labours—making a living, raising a family, building a nation—there are moments that are so painful, we want to give up. But inside searing pain and encroaching numbness, we might also find the depths of our courage, hear our deepest wisdom, and transition to the other side. . . .

“We can learn to mother ourselves!” Audre Lorde [1934–1992] once declared. [1] So I decided to *practice* listening to the Wise Woman in me. I got a simple blank journal, carried it with me, and wrote in it every day . . . and simply let her speak. . . . Listening to her voice, literally every few hours, is how I began to *practice* loving myself. Here’s what I discovered about Wise Woman: Her voice is quiet. . . . I have to get really quiet in order to hear her. How do I know when I am hearing her voice? She is tender and truthful. She is not afraid of anything or anyone. She does not give me all the answers, but she does know what I need to do in this moment—to wonder, grieve, fight, rage, listen, reimagine, breathe, or push. She helps me show up to the labour as my best self.

I believe that deep wisdom resides within each of us. Some call this voice by different sacred names—Spirit, God, Jesus, Allah, Om, Buddha-nature, Waheguru. Others think of this voice as the intuition one hears when in a calm state of mind. . . . Whatever name we choose, listening to our deepest wisdom requires disciplined practice. The loudest voices in the world right now are ones running on the energy of fear, criticism, and cruelty. The voices we spend the most time listening to, in the world and inside our own minds, shape the way we see, how we feel, and what we do. When I spend time listening to people who are speaking from *their* deepest wisdom, I can feel understanding, inspiration, and energy nourish the root of my own wisdom. But I must not

lose myself at the feet of others. My most vigilant spiritual practice is finding the seconds of solitude to get quiet enough to hear the Wise Woman in *me*.

References:

[1] Audre Lorde, “Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger,” *Sister Outsider* (The Crossing Press: 1984), 173.

Valarie Kaur, *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* (One World: 2020), 278–279, 280–281.

Order, Disorder, Reorder: Part Three

God’s Dream for Creation

Wednesday, August 26, 2020

In times of Disorder and deconstruction, we long for Reorder on a personal level—to be made new and whole again. But the Scriptures tell us that restoration will also happen on a communal, planetary, and even universal level! Jim Antal, a climate justice leader with the United Church of Christ, reminds us of our ability and responsibility to participate with God in the renewal and reordering of the earth.

“How can you know all these facts [about climate change] and still have hope?” For me, faith and hope are rooted in the conviction that, regardless of how bad things may be, a new story is waiting to take hold—something we have not yet seen or felt or experienced. . . . God is calling us—as individuals and congregations—to work with God and others to champion that new story.

For the vast majority in our society, that new story remains unseen. Wresting our future from the grip of fossil fuel seems impossible—our addiction is too strong, affordable options are too few, and the powers that defend the status quo are mighty, indeed. . . . We cannot be freed by chipping away at this millstone. We must begin to live into a new story by changing the human prospect [of destruction] and restoring creation’s viability.

That’s what the Water Protectors of Standing Rock have done. Their courageous, unflinching discipline inspired thousands to join them and millions to imagine with them the new world that is waiting to be born. They prepared themselves through prayer and ritual to face down sheriffs, paramilitary contractors, attack dogs, rubber bullets, pepper spray, and high-pressure water cannons in sub-zero temperatures. They were fuelled by hope, hope for a revolution rooted in love—love for God’s great gift of creation. . . .

We can’t accept God’s invitation to help create a new story unless we are willing to take action. We become partners with God when we act in unfamiliar, untested ways. Those new actions will be guided by a preferred future that embraces:

- resilience in place of growth
- collaboration in place of consumption
- wisdom in place of progress
- balance in place of addiction
- moderation in place of excess
- vision in place of convenience
- accountability in place of disregard
- self-giving love in place of self-centered fear . . .

As broken-hearted as God must be over what we have done to the gift of creation, God still has a dream. . . . God dreams that humans seek spiritual rather than material progress. God's dream envisions a just world at peace because gratitude has dissolved anxiety and generosity has eclipsed greed. God dreams of a time when love and mutual respect will bind humanity together, and the profound beauty of creation will be treasured. Let us embrace God's dream as our own. Suddenly, the horizon of our hope comes nearer. As we live into God's dream, we will rediscover who we truly are and all of creation will be singing.

Reference:

Jim Antal, *Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change* (Rowman & Littlefield: 2018), 162–163, 164-165, 169.

Order, Disorder, Reorder: Part Three

Repairing and Restoring Thursday, August 27, 2020

Barbara Holmes, a member of our Living School faculty, writes about what I'm calling Reorder as a cosmological fact. When we return to the original Order—the unbroken unity of all of creation with and in God—with new eyes, we see the gifts of abundance, diversity, and interconnectedness always available to us.

Any community that we construct on earth will be only a small model of a universe whose community includes billions of stars and planetary systems. Are we alone? We don't know, but if we don't know how to become a community with our own species, how shall we find harmony with other life forms in the cosmos? Our ideas of community begin with fragmentation, difference, and disparity seeking wholeness.

Our beloved community is an attempt to hot-glue disparate cultures, language, and ethnic origins into one mutually committed whole. The universe tells a completely different story—that everything is enfolded into everything. [1] . . .

Even though the languages of the new physics and cosmology discard mechanistic understandings of the universe in favour of potential, we love order. We see it where it doesn't exist and impose it through our narratives. Everything that we do conceals the unity that seems to be intrinsic to our life space. We take pictures of objects that seem to be outside of self, we demarcate national boundaries, we align with friends and break with enemies, we give and receive in what seem to be neat sequential packets of life and experience.

By contrast, [physicist David] Bohm [1917–1992] described the universe as a whole or implicate order that is “our primary reality . . . the subtle and universal reservoir of all life, the wellspring of all possibility, and the source of all meaning.” [2] The life space, Bohm wrote, is the . . . order that unfolds as a visible and discernible aspect of this unseen wholeness. . . .

We are one, and our wars and racial divisions cannot defeat the wholeness that lies just below the horizon of human awareness. . . . Diversity may not be a function of human effort or justice. It may just be the sea in which we swim. To enact a just order in human communities is to reclaim a sense of unity with divine and cosmological aspects of the life space. As Hebrew Scripture scholar Terence Fretheim suggests, the “Let us” discourse in Genesis [1:26] is a statement of the community of God. [3]

God is creating and ordering the universe, but does not do it alone. . . .

Perhaps in ways that we don't yet understand, the struggle for justice on many fronts is an enfolding image of the whole—the embodiment of a holistic and non-fragmented community. This community . . . would not be the logical outcome of progressive movements toward an ascertainable external goal, but would be the sum of past, present, and future expectations and disappointments. Then the community-called-beloved becomes all that we can and cannot conceive, all that lies beyond the horizon of apprehension but is available to us as part of the matrix of wholeness.

References:

[1] David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (Routledge: 2002, ©1980), 225.

[2] Diarmuid Ó Murchú, *Quantum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics*, rev. ed. (Crossroad: 2004), 62.

[3] Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Abingdon Press: 2005), 42–43.

Adapted from Barbara A. Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently*, 2nd ed. (CAC Publishing: 2020), 194–195, 196.

Order, Disorder, Reorder: Part Three

My Story, Our Story, THE Story Friday, August 28, 2020

Only the whole self is ever ready for the whole God, so *Reorder* always involves moving beyond the dualistic mind toward a more spacious, contemplative knowing. In fact, if we are going to rebuild society, we first need to be rebuilt ourselves. A healthy psyche lives within at least three levels of meaning. We might imagine three domes, or containers. The first and smallest dome is called *My Story*, the second larger dome is *Our Story*, and the third and largest dome is *The Story*.

In the first dome is my private life: those issues that make me special, inferior or superior, right or wrong, depending on how “I” see it. “I” and my feelings and opinions are the reference points for everything. Jesus teaches that we must let go of exactly this, and yet this is the very tiny and false self that contemporary people take as normative, and even sufficient.

The next realm of meaning is about Us. *Our Story* is the dome of our group, our community, our country, our church—perhaps our nationality or ethnic group. These groups are the necessary training grounds for belonging, attaching, trusting, and loving. Unfortunately, some folks just spend their lives defending the boundaries and “glory” of their group. Group egocentricity is even more dangerous than personal egocentricity. It looks like greatness when it is often no more than disguised egotism. Loyalties at this level have driven most of human history—and most wars—up to now.

The third and largest dome of meaning is *THE Story*, the realm of universal meaning and the patterns that are always true in every culture. This level assures and insures the other two. It holds them together in sacred meaning. In fact, we could say that the greater the opposites we can hold together, the greater soul we usually have.

Biblical religion, at its best, honors and combines all three levels: personal journey as raw material, communal identity as school and training ground, and an encounter with true

transcendence as the integration and gathering place for all the parts together. True transcendence frees us from the tyranny of *I Am* and the idolatry of *We Are*. Still, when all three are taken seriously, as the Bible does very well, we have a full life—fully human and fully divine.

The person who lives most of their life grounded within *THE Story* is the mystic, the prophet, the universal human, the saint, the whole one. These are the people who look out at the smaller picture with eyes as wide as saucers because they observe from the utterly big picture—with love. If we hope for societal reconstruction, it will come from people *who can see reality at all three levels simultaneously*, honoring the divine level and ultimately living inside of the great story line.

Reference:

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *The Wisdom Pattern* (Franciscan Media: 2020), 17, 103, 105–107, 113–115.

Practice: The Welcoming Prayer

Only in the final *Reorder* stage can darkness and light coexist, can paradox be okay. We are finally at home in the only world that ever existed. This is true and contemplative knowing.

I'd like to offer you a form of contemplation—a practice of accepting paradox and holding the tension of contradictions—called “The Welcoming Prayer.”

First, identify a hurt or an offense in your life. Remember the feelings you first experienced with this hurt and feel them the way you first felt them. Notice how this shows up in your body. Paying attention to your body's sensations keeps you from jumping into the mind and its dualistic games of good/bad, win/lose, either/or.

After you can identify the hurt and feel it in your body, welcome it. Stop fighting it. Stop splitting and blaming. Welcome the grief. Welcome the anger. It's hard to do, but for some reason, when we name it, feel it, and welcome it, transformation can begin.

Don't lose presence to the moment. Any kind of analysis will lead you back into attachment to your ego self. The reason a bird sitting on a hot wire is not electrocuted is quite simply because it does not touch the ground to give the electricity a pathway. Hold the creative tension, but don't ground it by thinking about it, critiquing it, or analyzing it.

When you're able to welcome your own pain, you will, in some way, feel the pain of the whole world. This is what it means to be human—and, also, what it means to be divine. You can hold this immense pain because you too are being held by the very One who went through this process on the Cross. Jesus held all the pain of the world, at least symbolically or archetypally; though the world had come to hate him, he refused to hate it back.

Now, hand all of this pain—yours and the world’s—over to God. Let it go. Ask for the grace of forgiveness for the person who hurt you, for the event that offended you, for the reality of suffering in each life.

I can’t promise the pain will leave easily or quickly. To forgive is not to forget. But letting go frees up a great amount of soul-energy that liberates a level of life you didn’t know existed. It leads you to your True Self.



Adapted from Richard Rohr, *The Art of Letting Go: Living the Wisdom of Saint Francis*, disc 6 (Sounds True: 2010), [CD](#); and

Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer (Crossroad: 1999, 2003), 159.

Image credit: *Garden of Wish Fulfilment* (detail), Arshile Gorki, 1944, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon Portugal.