



Adapted from articles by Richard Rohr

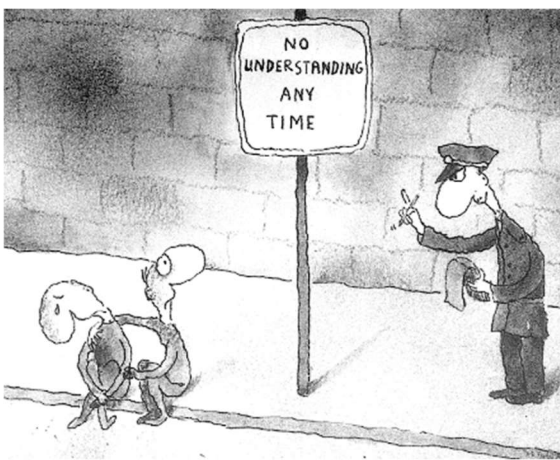
“Community as Alternative Consciousness” and “Being One with the Other”

In the words of Timothy Gorrige and Rosie Beckham, “Faith in the resurrection is the ground on which Christians hope for a *different* future, a transition to a society less destructive, more peaceful and more whole. Living in this hope . . . calls [the assembly of Christians] to live as a ‘contrast community’ to society.”

Building such “contrast” communities was precisely Paul’s missionary strategy. Paul was very practical. He taught that our faith must take actual form in a living, loving group of people. Otherwise, love is just a theory. Paul seems to think that corporate evil can only be confronted or overcome with corporate good. He knows that a love-transformed individual can do little against what he calls “the powers and the principalities,” or what some of us call the “system.” Our collective consciousness deems such institutions “too big to fail.” We are mostly oblivious to these forces because we take them as normative and in fact absolutely necessary. Cultural blind spots can only be overcome by a group of people affirming and supporting one another in an alternative consciousness. Thankfully, we’re now seeing many people, religious and secular, from all around the world, coming together to form alternative systems for sharing resources, living simply, and imagining a sustainable future. It has been one of the spiritual gifts of the pandemic.

Mother Teresa diagnosed the world's ills in this way: we've just "forgotten that we belong to each other." Kinship is what happens to us when we refuse to let that happen. With kinship as the goal, other essential things fall into place; without it, no justice, no peace. I suspect that were kinship our goal, we would no longer be promoting justice—we would be celebrating it.

Often we strike the high moral distance that separates "us" from "them," and yet it is God's dream come true when we recognize that there exists no daylight between us. Serving others is good. It's a start. But it's just the hallway that leads to the Grand Ballroom. Kinship consists not of serving the other, but of being one with the other. Jesus was not "a man for others"; he was one with them. There is a world of difference in that. . . .



No daylight to separate us. Only kinship. Inching ourselves closer to creating a community of kinship such that God might recognize it. Soon we imagine, with God, this circle of compassion. Then we imagine no one standing outside of that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased. We stand there with those whose dignity has been denied. We locate ourselves with the poor and the powerless and the voiceless. At the edges, we join the easily despised and the readily left out. We

stand with the demonized so that the demonizing will stop. We situate ourselves right next to the disposable so that the day will come when we stop throwing people away. The prophet Habakkuk [2:3] writes, "The vision still has its time, presses onto fulfillment and it will not disappoint . . . and if it delays, wait for it." God presses us on to Kinship, always hopeful that its time has come.

That you have made us in the image of your own mystery
thanks be to you, O God.

That in the soul of every human being
there are depths beyond naming
and heights greater than knowing
thanks be to you.

Grant us the grace of inner sight this day
that we may see you as the Self within all selves.

Grant us the grace of love this day
that amidst the pain and disfigurement of life
We may find the treasure that is unlocked by love,
that amidst the pain and disfigurement of our own lives
we may know the richness
that lies buried in the human soul.

-from *Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter*.



Elaine