

“Every Thing is Sacred” — 50-04  
PAUSE TO CONSIDER: REFLECTIONS ON SESSION #4



1. First there was snow and now there is slush. Tomorrow, more snow... however Spring is around the corner — yahoo!! Enjoy continued viewing of this excellent video:
  - Contemplation Practice: 1:13 - 3:33 or listen to the closing for 50-03 with Carey Landry — see [sduc.ca/Ministries/AdultSpiritualDevelopment/Everythingissacred](http://sduc.ca/Ministries/AdultSpiritualDevelopment/Everythingissacred)
  - 25:00- Fr. Richard talks about ‘now’ in his life, beginning with the tricycle metaphor.
  - 30:00 Patrick Boland talks about his “flying a plane” metaphor, using all the dials etc. but still needing to look out of the window.
  - 31:00 Reflection #6 read by Fr. Richard and Patrick.
  - 39:00 Fr. Richard discusses seeing God in Nature.... much like our opening tonight with Trish.
2. Trish’s opening: Trish walked us through a trip to a remote area in the south of the province which was a return visit. This time it was a solo camping adventure with her little dog Page. She shared with us pictures of the river that wound through the area, of a deer in the meadow near her camp and one of her and Page fly fishing.

The essence of her opening was the sacredness of the setting and her experience of God being very near and real to her. Thank you so much, Trish, for setting the tone for the evening. You were a blessing to us.

3. Housekeeping with Brenda

- a. **Coffee and Muffin Ministry** on March 2 in the foyer at St. David’s.

b. **Pastoral Care Zoom** gathering will go as usual between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. Wednesday morning with Rev. Eva.

c. **Early morning Lenten Meditation** on Thursday morning at 8:30 on Zoom with Thursday Morning Bible Study meeting at 10. Contact the office to receive an invitation to the Lenten Meditation with Rev. Eva.

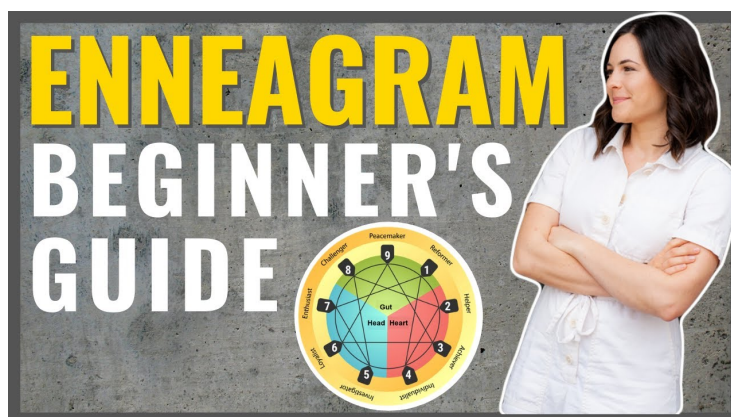
d. **St. David's Council needs a chairperson** for the Affirming Ministry. Call Colin or the office if you would like to participate in this very valuable ministry.

e. If crafting is in your life, join others on Friday afternoon between 1 and 4 at Northminster. RSVP to Suzanne Vandervoort. She is overwhelmed with the response to her asking for left over yarn to provide mitts, toques to folks in need who visit the church on a regular basis — taking advantage of food provided.

4. Wayne's Reflections on Reflections 15 through 21. **Discussion as we move through the Reflections with Wayne seems to involve many of us. I have run comments for Pause to Consider together in an ongoing conversation. Forgive the paraphrasing of your ideas.**

#### **Snippets of conversion**

- **Waking up to love:** a story of a man waking up in the morning and reaching across to touch his wife's hand but she is no longer there. The certainty, however, is that someday, he knows she'll be there when he reaches out to her.
- **Waking up to love**, Reflection 15 blends with **Suffering**, Reflection 16. When we lose a friend, the point of grief yields appreciation more than at any time — it is enduringly memorable.
- We live in a hedonistic society where we attempt to avoid pain and seek pleasure. Pain is transformational.
- The book, "Bittersweet" by Susan Cain, (Author of "Quiet") says that sorrow and longing make us whole. Opposites like light and dark, bitter and sweet are with us always. Suffering and joy are partners.
  - **Our Shadow:** "The greater light you are, the greater is your shadow." Leonard Coen sings: Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack a crack in everything. **That's how the light gets in.**
- Our inner child needs to be encountered. In our quest for perfection, rather than listing our shortcomings, we should instead list the things we want to get better at.
- God loves you.
- Shared stories of adversities.
- **Change:** Our society embraces solidarity, stability. We need to accept change, be flexible. Change happens sometimes in spite of ourselves. It happens to us.
- **Up There: (19)** Every thing is sacred. God is every where. We are in God's presence all the time.
- Every Thing and Every One.
- Tradition is bound up in our thinking about God.
- **Divine Depth:** sharing of experiences with personality typing systems like enneagrams, MBTI ... etc. Tools to help me understand myself.
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- **Embodying Depth:** shared experiences with Retreats, Pilgrimages and Labyrinths.
- See Broadview June July 2022 for 10 Camino pilgrimages.
- Salvation and Sin are Corporate, says Fr. Richard. Jesus voluntarily accepted undeserved suffering. No suffering is deserved. It was an act of total solidarity with the pain of the world... all life and all suffering. (From the April 2022 Youtube video with Fr. Richard Rohr.

#### 5. Closing with Michael: EVERYTHING IS SACRED – CLOSING

I am going to talk about an exercise I propose that everyone think of doing. This being me, you should expect by now that it may not be comfortable or easy for you. But it should be. This exercise has added poignancy and is more topical for me tonight, as I lost a good friend last week very suddenly and unexpectedly. So here goes:

I think everyone should be able to write their own eulogy. Really---if this is the last time a large body of friends and family will be together to hear about who you were, why wouldn't you want to be the one to speak to them---to tell them about the best who you were that you can think of and the things you would want people to take with them about you.

I wrote mine---some 12 or 13 years ago, I think. I check back in on it every so often. Yup, no changes needed. And---in my current state of wanting to share more private things with more people if I think it may be of help---I'm going to share mine with all of you. You can grab some Kleenex if you think you may need it.

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Cry a little bit, but not too much. For my life has been the horn of plenty. And I have drunk very deeply.

Cry a little bit, but not too much. For I have been blessed with the wonder of the companionship of so many good friends, the deep love of family and a kaleidoscope of incredible experiences

Cry a little bit, but not too much. For I have had food and wine of the best. I have listened to and played music of the finest. I have seen vistas and things incredible. I have laughed and cried and shouted and whispered and everything in between. And I have done a lot of stuff.

Cry a little bit, but not too much. For I had Great Life Tasks---and accomplished many of them. I <enjoyed> life. I didn't wait for life to live itself. I didn't stop exploring and learning and interacting. I leave life with very few regrets.

Cry a little bit, but not <too> much. Because I was a lucky man. I had a good life. And if I had one wish for all of you, it would be that all of you could have and enjoy even half of the contentment and happiness and joy that I have partaken of. If your memories of my life and how I lived it can serve as a beacon for you, then all to the good. Cry just a little, and let there be tears of joy intermixed in there somewhere.

'cause up wherever I am? I WON'T be crying. I'll be too busy living life.

6. Michael's Notes to Date: Enjoy!!

REFLECTIONS 1-7

#### Exercise 1-1

If I think of trigger words, material = pleasure/status, spiritual = curiosity, priestly = control, rules, borders, frameworks, incarnational = acceptance. I think incarnational is where I \*want\* to go, just tough to get there. There's an important distinction for me. The other 3...they all have an element of expectation. Acquire goods or status and reward x will come. Go on a spiritual quest and enlightenment (a.k.a reward y) will come. Follow scripture and the rules and reward z will be yours. I get what he's saying. Incarnational, the acceptance quotient of that, it doesn't depend on anything or anyone. Just you.

Even acceptance has its peril. You don't want to stop growing or questioning as a result. But yes—you can look to embrace the unknown. You can look to be awed. Not as many people look for that anymore.

#### Exercise 1-2 and 1-3

Birth-age 5. Incarnational but with some material. I remember, still, exactly the trigger point. I was 3, my sister 1 year old. Our birthdays are 9 days apart. In a travesty of justice she got the chocolate cake and I wound up with the vanilla. Still rankles

Age 5-12. Priestly, but in the sense that I was a kid who did like learning and exploring, so a dash of spiritual? I migrated from astronomy to dinosaurs to mineralogy. Also maybe some more spiritual?—music and piano became a significant part of my life starting at this point

Age 12-16. Probably a decent mix of the 4. I began to really pay attention to my religion. I

also didn't lack for much and as a result didn't go after much in the way of possessions. There was \*one\* trigger event that spawned a nascent material worldview combined with spiritual. I tasted my first bottle of good wine. It's a passion that remains strong.

It might also surprise you that I was quite the introvert until University. But ages 16-26 were a very strange mix for me. 19-24 was probably quite material. I was in business school and bought in to the achievement mantra. That changed radically at age 25. That started a 3 year period of intense spiritual and incarnational. I couldn't afford to look anywhere else. I had colitis for those 3 years and, on the operating table at 27, had to face up to the fact that it might be my—last—day. You are \*never\* the same after that and I think it forged part of my essential empathic nature, perhaps in thanks for everyone who supported me.

27-today. The mix. I have and love my nice car, pretty floor and fine wines. I also remain engaged in my and others' religions and other aspects of structured practices (work). I continue to actively explore my spirituality. And in the exploration of the wonder of my humanity I think I touch the incarnational now and again. Touch points like sunset at Cable Beach and a winter hike in Yosemite; losing my friend Jason to cancer at the age of 28; An annual weekend of joy in California every year for my friend Frank's charity wine event; And checking off seven of my Great Life Tasks help shape my worldviews

Exercise 1-4. I'll be quick. I'd turn inward a statement I've made to more than one friend I've cared deeply about

“You have so \*much\* of yourself to believe in. \*so\* much. All you have to do is believe.”

Incarnational for me probably means embracing less so I can experience the more. In reading Braiding Sweetgrass, Robyn Kimmerer hooked me on creating a Bill of Responsibilities. In doing that exercise, I may have come close to incarnational

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#### Exercise 2-1

That's a big question. And not easy to unpack. Perhaps my thinking on order started with consequences. My bad actions or inactions had consequences. So did my good actions or inactions. I think part of order twines in respect and a moral code. Certainly, particularly in social settings, there is the constant ebb and flow of hierarchy which \*is\* a kind of order. Religion gave traditions and rules and subtly emphasized value in looking back (again, something that is not necessarily common in the achievement mantra). I'd certainly say that the geographic and emotional stability of loving parents and sibling contributed to my version of order. Leadership also affects order, I learned. And, later in life, the potential value of a shakeup, of disruption-to-reorder. Probably all 4 worldviews have some relationship with order.

#### Exercise 2-2

I do not like letting people down where a modicum of trust and respect has occurred. I've done that, both at work and particularly at a not-for-profit board level. It still bothers me. I also intensely don't like being unable to help people. And losing a friend is not

fun. This happened somewhat recently with a close friend who cut off all communication with me, offering no reason why. I think the part that disappointed and upset me the most was that I thought we had built an oasis of trust together and it seems I clearly misperceived that. It hurt, and still does to a degree.

What have I learned? That I have so much of myself to believe in and I should do a better job of believing. That and being more mature. 'Maturity' is my Word of the Year for 2023. I came up with a definition long ago. From a long-ago entry in my journals:

*So, here I am practising my way through an old, old piece that I performed long ago, and I have a wry smile on my face. Still on the score are my teacher Ina's instructions "use heavy arm to bring out the melody". And I smile wryly. Because I quite well remember at the time thinking "why would I do it this way?". And now, it is what I do naturally and I think "why wouldn't I do it this way?"*

*Maybe what this leads to is an appreciation of maturity. Because, just maybe, maturity is nothing more than doing the right thing a little more often, in convergence with doing things right a little more often. If I take that up, then maturity is a never-ending process....and it can have regressions too. Now, I'm uncomfortable analogizing growing maturity with growing perfection, probably because that's an artificially-imposed goal. Perfection all too many times involves circumstances in a subjective vacuum. A perfectionist, is usually very inward-focussed and not community-oriented. As with the interested-interesting model for friendship, I think you need both parts of my equation for maturity. And so, "doing the right thing more*

*often" is intrinsically a community-driven task, mostly because its effect is meant to be felt and shared by the community. So there's a disconnect here.*

*It also doesn't mean we should <always> be more mature. Heavens no. a) we have to allow ourselves to do things wrong once in a while, b) there's not a whole lot of fun in doing the right thing <all> the time. Recognize the wicked devil in yourself and you'll have a bit more zest to your life. Just don't give that devil an unmanageable leash*

In picking it as my Word, I've added a couple brush strokes. It means doing, not just thinking and talking about it. And it means being very aware to make sure, as much as possible, that my right isn't some deserving person's wrong. I guess another way to put that is to practise care and consideration

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#### Exercise 3-1

I'm not sure candidly I ever have been that disordered. But probably closest were the 3 years with colitis and the time I was terminated from my law firm. In both cases, I came to reorder through taking things slow in terms of recovery, and particularly from the work perspective, allowing myself the breathing room and time to explore other ideas about work and other options for using my skills. Perhaps out of both those experiences, I've come to boil that process down to one question I ask myself once in a while. "Who am I and who do I choose to be?". Not who do I want to be, which is the world of moonbeams and pipe dreams. Choosing means I have to take an active hand. At the same time, I no longer look to control my career but rather shape it. That allows for flexibility and change.

I think in both cases, I valued myself and the people who supported me more. I was maybe surprised at...my own resiliency

### Exercise 3-2

Again, imperfect since I'm not sure I've ever been in the disorder side, but

Birth-age 12 – order

12-16 – order

18-24 – order

25-28—disorder

29-38—reorder

39-42—disorder (had begun already to be disenchanted with law firm work)

42- -- reorder

Exercise 3-3, I'll only say that the above timeline makes sense for me when comparing to my worldview timeline

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Exercise 4-1. Radiance, depth and stability are the words that speak the most to me. As you can well appreciate, as a follower of Judaism, what I must try to do is substitute "God" where St. Patrick has used "Christ". If I do that, can I play this out?

The last 4 lines are hard. They skirt very close to idolatry if you read them a certain way. As in "because of \*me\*, God is in you if you are lucky enough to speak of me, to look at me, to hear me, to think of me". I understand the thrust---that it's sort of meant to be the reverse....that by being a good person, I am helping to connect others to divinity and the want is for people to genuinely care about my well-being, from which care for everyone's well-being can spring.

The first part of the poem calls on the 5 elements---water, air, fire, earth, spirit. It is \*interesting\* that he avoids any mention of dark. That is a miss for me. The reality of the world can have the beauty of night and the necessity of dark, recognizing it and letting \*it\* be a part of your life as well. My continuing search for balance again. I especially like the middle part,

because "with", "before" and "behind" can also be shifted to be temporal in nature instead of physical, a part that I think is quite important to reference.

The biggest sense, when you think more about these words, is that (God) is shown as not something you have to reach for or to strive for. Wherever you go, however you move, whatever you do, God "travels" fully with you, like an encircling sphere. That's kind of lovely

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### Exercise 5-1

I've given away my copy of The Universal Christ, it seems, and I haven't bought a replacement, so this time I will have to resort to commenting on the content of the chapter. YOU BET. This is a very long entry from the journals, written near the start of the pandemic:

*\* well, with the pandemic upon us, it becomes clear---and one has to admit failure---that we are manifestly unready to deal with the world around us when it seeps out of our control. I think there are several reasons for that. The first is the most basic. People's lives have become so very certain. With certainty comes complacency, rigidity and a devolution of the ability to imagine, create, innovate and change. Like atrophied muscles, we haven't had to use that part of ourselves that handles and rides uncertainty very much, and now we're suffering for it. Second, it's undeniable that as a populace, I can extend my theory about democracy being incompatible with the 21<sup>st</sup> century Western hemisphere human to say that the WHH is equally incompatible with nature and his/her natural surroundings. In general, at best, man will look to nature as a balm and refuge from the stresses of his/her life. And yes, I tip my hat to vegans and vegetarians who have made that choice to respect animals. But.*

*How many of them still drive cars everywhere? Or smoke on the sidewalk? Or use a plethora of nondegradables? The person who truly hallows nature? One in 20,000? Less?*

*We are also not built to be social eunuchs for an extended period of time, to be, as I term it, "bubble-wrapped". With the explosion of social media, it has, I think, fostered a subliminal extra overdrive to \*be\* social, to be busy interacting with the people around you. Some of us are---on zoom, on skype, on facetime and the many other platforms that thankfully are there for us to see and keep in touch with those we cherish. But an order to self-isolate, to withdraw from the world...that order chafes. I do think the majority of people have the discipline to do that for 2 weeks. How many will be able to do it for 2-3 months?*

*Lastly, we have not, not really, had to deal with communal mortality as a community before now. We have not had to deal with "less-ness" on a communal scale before now. These are very uncomfortably-fitting clothes.*

*All is not bad. The hero will emerge in many of us, to bring aid and succor to those in need. I've already done it. I have even more admiration for our healthcare professionals and volunteers than I did before, as they willingly put on the medical soldier's uniform and sally forth to do battle and save lives. My friend Rob, he works at Ford. He's been pulling 18 hour days for the last 2 weeks or so. He is proud of it, and so am I of him---he is making a real contribution to the repurposing effort and his work \*will\* save lives. Most of us don't get to say that in our everyday jobs. More of us will get to say it now. Our longtime neighbour and close*

*friend Julie got back safely to her home after the unthinkable ordeal of being trapped on the Zaandam. We are so grateful she is still with us. I'm sure it will bring us even closer to her than we were before---I went to a grocery store for the first time in 19 days principally to pick up flowers to leave for her when she arrived.*

*Now a big question for me is this. When this does finally run its course, how much will people choose to remember? A significant issue for us today is that there is no lived learning out there---the Spanish Flu was 2 generations ago and there's no one here to say "this is what worked, this is what didn't". Yes, we had SARS, but that was not a widespread phenomenon. To counter that, the level of expertise being brought to bear on the problem---excluding the leader of the US perhaps---is immense, and that applied expertise, as it gains empirical experience with the virus, will not be forgotten. Mostly, everyone is speaking of the physical cost, the economic cost and the social cost. Not enough people are tackling the emotional cost of what this is. And there's this. Will people \*use\* this alone time differently? Will they use it to reflect on some aspects of their lives? To journal, as I am doing now? To innovate even in a small way by trying to cook a new dish? And....to actually spend real time with their spouse and family (at least those in the same house as them)? News at 11, stay tuned.*

*Here's another one from a bit later....you will recognize the book reference 😊*

*As I partake in Shabbat Shirah---the Sabbath of Song---and as I start into Brene Brown's book, *Braving the Wilderness* (I watched her Netflix talk and concluded that her mantra is*

*the noble pursuit of vulnerability), I thought a little about hope. That is not something that has been—consciously—on our minds during Covid. But there is, and has been, an opportunity to grasp at a different kind of hope---the one based on being able to deepen your “relationships of vulnerability”....to share the burden of this and gain strength from both being shared with and the sharing—as several of my best friends have done with and for me. This idea came into focus in a conversation I had yesterday with my friend Anne. Anne lost her father—my friend Alf---a little while ago. She has so many pressures right now on her life, bravely managing them all. But she doesn’t shy away from talking about it all with me....from having some tears in front of me. That is the courage of being vulnerable. She gives a gift to me. In doing so, in being willing to share in that way, it lights a candle of hope in me somehow. This will be a brave sort of thing to say, but I am not sure that you can have and cherish hope \*without\* being vulnerable---without being the less so that you can embrace the more. Because for me, an integral part of hope is the wonder of the new (which can be a new conception of the old, by the way). And one cannot really see the new without venturing into the unknown, at least to some degree. And venturing into the unknown....can engender “danger” and require courage. THE COURAGE TO (coming back to this again) LEAVE CERTAINTY BEHIND. The courage to accept that *\*the\* \*best\* \*parts\* of your life can be **those parts that you have no control over.** Some---not all---but some of faith is the wholehearted embracing of the unknown. Of hidden hope that beckons to be discovered. When it’s not about you, it can be the most about you.**

WAIT---I FOUND THE PDF OF THE ITALICIZED CHAPTER 1 ITEMS!!

**Faith, hope and love are the very nature of God and thus the nature of all Being. Such goodness cannot die.** That’s probably the one that resonates the most, perhaps because it might be the most “aggressively” positive. And yes, I think for me that’s true. That the God I believe in does have room for me, with all my imperfections and inadequacies, just as (s)he has room for everyone and everything. Is that “goodness”? It might be at least one manifestation of it.

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#### Exercise 6-1

I wasn’t able to do that this week, but I can certainly reference places where and when I \*have\* done this. Morning at friends’ boat-access-only cottage on many Labour Day weekends with a single loon in the lake mist and fog. Winter in Yosemite, encountering a single black raven on Mirror Lake (I’ll send along the picture). Snorkeling at Ningaloo Reef in West Australia where I saw for the first time “God’s Aquarium” (wrote a piece about that). Nighttime in Segovia walking the ring road---maybe the holiest hour I’ve ever had in my life, with the soft light of the cathedral far up the hill ever-present and the vivid memory of the amazing castle and the roman aqueduct and sunset still fresh in my mind. I think the common thread in each of these things is the wonder of the world’s diversity and the honour the world does to me in sharing those moments with me. I mentioned recently to people that, driving up the Pacific Coast Highway through Carmel and Big Sur....I was reminded why the world is worth saving.

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Exercise 7-1. \*probably\* I relate to and resonate more with the universal God than the personal one. Deb and I had this conversation a long, long time ago, where I declaimed—at the time—that I believed in God, yes, very much. But did I need God in my everyday life? Maybe not.

Exercise 7-2. Not asking much, are you?

I think I'll start with self-plagiarization. I'll start with the prayer I came up with for my opening for Starlight:

*I pray to better understand the things I need to understand  
I pray to know the things I need to know—and to always have some things that I don't  
I pray to never stop thinking and questioning and searching  
I pray to accept obstacles and challenges and weave them positively into my life experience  
I pray to have more empathy and compassion... and admiration...for everyone around me  
I pray to never lose the zest for self-exploration and to never stop journeying  
I pray for the stout companionship of friends, family, animals---entities who I can love and who can love me back. I pray to be worthy of that regard.*

Other than that? OK, I'll try. I would ask you, God who is with me personally, to show me how I can be more of you within me. To teach me in ways in which I can learn and maybe, if it's appropriate, teach others. And I guess I would ask to be shown how the God-within-me connects to the God-all-around-me and how they interact to produce the awesome whole.

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In one of my closings long ago, I talked at length about my 'recipe' for personal divinity. I continue to believe that everyone—and probably everything—can evince divinity.

### Exercise 8-1

Probably the biggest is paying more attention to the plight of people or animals I don't know. Harari talks a bit about a human's incapacity to care for 8 billion other humans but I could be better at this. And I do

tend to shy away from situations of conflict or activities where I would need to take an active stand. I'm a thinker and talker, and less of a doer there. That is probably straight lack of courage on my part and I'm slowly trying to change, but the drive of my nature is to encourage people to get along.

### Exercise 8-2

I'm happy to say, not really a lot. I am usually ready and willing to be vulnerable and self-honest. Maybe I could go to the point where I do believe I'm a good friend to all my friends, when very occasionally that is not the case in terms of e.g. effort to connect and help.

I will tell you one area, though, that this applied, at least subconsciously, for a long while. I submersed myself in the identity of 'Canadian'. Specifically, 'nice, polite Canadian' so I didn't have to face various cultural shames such as treatment of Chinese immigrants in 1800s and 1900s, Japanese POWs and above all, mistreatment of indigenous peoples.

### Exercise 8-3

I may. I will share if any journaling about this comes up, but I'm kind of conditioned to essay doing the heavy lifting of this work from within first. Of course, I recognize Rohr's point—that God is within all of us as well as without.

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I say for every actor there is an equal and opposite reactor. But we are also fully conditioned in the ideology of the achievement machine

Better even than who do you want to be or how do you want to be—who do you \*choose\* to be. 'Want' can be the world of moonbeams and pipe dreams. 'Choose' means you have to take an active role.

#### Exercise 9-1

When I think about the gamut of most of those choices, I think I can relatively confidently say that none of them was made in a vacuum, that they had a fair amount of deliberation, process and most of all, time. I may lose something if value in not emphasizing instinct or 'living on my veins', but in how I myself look at choices, makes sense for me. The root of that is another saying of mine—"if you can't question, then you haven't chosen".

That means not only questioning before you make a choice but questioning after as well, examining the consequences of your choice

#### Exercise 8-2

I'd say a mix of both. The most fundamental decision of mine in that respect was my decision not to marry. For a very long time, I would not permit myself to engage

in a relationship outside my faith.

That was a mix. I knew how important that was to my parents and I didn't want to disappoint them. But it was also me. I was very, very aware of all the great-aunts and uncles and cousins I never knew who were killed for being Jewish. I, who had a choice, did not feel up to dishonouring their lives and memories by turning my back on my religion in this sphere

#### Exercise 9-3

Not a current one, but here's a recent-ish one where I looked at one aspect of the choice process:

*I am beginning to be concerned about a cause of fundamental individualized imbalance. Most of us live in places filled with a lot of people, a lot of things and a lot of choices. They may be crowding out a choice that is sort of necessary---the choice of NOT doing, NOT seeing, (sort-of) not \*being\*. Most of us, we don't rest as much as humans used to. There is therapeutic goodness being shunted aside because of that. When I say to my friend Mary that I couldn't work more than 3 days a week because I'd never be able to get "everything" done, there may be a problem. Now me, I'm conscious of it. And I do, very occasionally, try to rest. A lot of people, I think, find that place when they go to the gym or go for a run. Yet even those places are filled with "noise" and distractions. It's not completely bad to "want to do so many interesting things" but I do wonder if we are beginning to get afflicted with being over-scheduled...and maybe missing opportunities to better ourselves by setting aside time to not worry and just \*rest\*. And*

*I'm coming from a place where a spouse and children aren't present.*

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I've said before—the exercise of inclusion and exclusion is, fundamentally, fundamentalism for me

I remember the quote here from Universal Christ as particularly grabbing at me: "You could say that the commonplace exercise of assigning blame has the same root. I firmly believe that leadership is taking ownership of responsibility and taking responsibility for ownership."

#### Exercise 10-1

I truly honestly don't know that I've ever done it, unless we go back to when I was very young. That doesn't mean I don't engage—much too often—in something parallel. I do it out of pure enthusiasm but I have to constantly be on guard against interrupting someone else while they're speaking or dominating a conversation in a way that might signal exclusion. I've gotten better, but it's a painfully slow process.

#### Exercise 10-2

Opposite of the above, so many it's hard to pick out one or two, but I'll

try. The retreat I attended last year—though not directly connected to young artists in need, global health and peace professionals or indigenous peoples, I was welcomed and accepted by all 3 groups.

Another was when the president and chair of our synagogue invited dad and me to come for Sabbath dinner with the rabbi, his daughter and one other guest. I'd say in both cases, I felt privileged. And inspired. It was an invitation to a deeper relationship or understanding and I accepted.

Exercise 10-3. There's one recent one I think I've already alluded to which really focuses this—the former close friend of mine who included me to a very deep level of vulnerability on her part and then completely and totally excluded me, a situation that has lasted well over a year and shows no sign of changing. I spent a lot of time conjecturing what I might have done wrong, was convinced (with the help of my best friend) that I hadn't done anything wrong. And what I choose to do? I choose not to close the door. I won't leave it wide open for the wind of emotion to whistle through, but I won't and I can't go far enough to actively exclude. I do return to my enduring definition of a friend. For a friend to be so, they have to be interested and they have to be interesting and they have to be both

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**A human needs a place to know.  
And a human needs to know  
his/her place.**

Exercise 11-1

Gracious, participatory, willingly or  
unwillingly

A kind of gentle inspiration/  
affirmation? We are allowed and  
encouraged to be less. Truly, when  
it is not about you it can be the  
most about you. That everybody,  
good/bad/similar/different has a  
part to play in God's drama, is a  
puzzle piece in God's puzzle. And  
this—how often, consciously or  
unconsciously, do we label evil and  
bad that which we are too lazy to do  
the work to understand.

Emotions? For me---even for  
someone who quests after balance,  
who has lived a good and full life, I  
think the passage still evokes a  
sense of mild yearning and/or  
longing. And just maybe a little  
conflict, almost in the vein of self-  
determination seems diminished by  
this passage when you first read it.  
The participatory part has to sink in.

mmm---like composing music, I  
don't do well when put under  
pressure to journal, but OK---here's  
what I just wrote:

*I don't stop to give this enough thought. How  
many different people there are and how many  
different ways there are to live a life and express  
one's humanity. No matter how many books I  
read, how many discussions I have, how many  
retreats I attend and how many podcasts and*

*shows I watch, the honest truth is that I won't  
\*know\* what living life is like for virtually anyone  
other than myself. Our life experience \*is\* ours  
and I think the best I can do is be a better listener  
and remain curious about how other people do  
live their lives. Maybe/probably that's what  
tolerance and inclusion is as a definition.  
Allowing that someone else's lived life is right for  
them and isn't wrong---even if it may be wrong  
for you*

Or—let me also then grab an excerpt from my  
notes for Universal Christ at page 45

*45, early Christians focused more and more on  
Jesus alone. In a way (and brace yourselves for  
this), this was a very human thing to do. I think  
this gets at another idea of mine. That Christians  
have "played it safe" by concentrating on Jesus as  
intermediary. It takes a particular courage,  
perhaps, to attempt to commune with God  
directly or to confront God. Instead, Jesus stands  
as the "master father confessor"? "Let HIM do  
the hard work" and we'll do our part by tithing  
and going to church". Food for thought perhaps.*

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I am again going to grab some of my notes from  
Universal Christ for pages 50-51. And I believe  
God first chooses to forgive as far back as Adam  
and Eve, but explicitly during the passage where  
Abraham prepares to offer Isaac as a sacrifice.

*I'm going to "dissertize" about two separate ideas  
here. The first is about one of the pillars of faith (I  
would daringly say \*any\* faith). HUMILITY. To do  
what Rohr is asking means to, kind of, make an  
offering of the soul. More bluntly, to embrace  
"less-ness". We humans? As a species? We SUCK  
at being less. We really, really do. But is there  
value in being less? I vehemently say there is.  
Because once you've been less, you appreciate  
the more so much more. AND, you have a far  
greater well of empathy to draw from for others  
who are less. How can you help someone if  
you've never known want of your own?*

*The second idea is the next pillar of faith---  
 FORGIVENESS. Rohr's discussion of God on these  
 2 pages fits with a concept I briefly outlined on  
 the 28<sup>th</sup> and will set down in a bit more detail  
 here. That concept is what I have come to call  
 "covenantal evolution". I begin this with Noah.  
 God is grieved at what (s)he has created. (She  
 puts the world through the great carwash in the  
 sky. (S)he says "oops---maybe I went too far".  
 God's first covenant with Noah---that won't  
 happen again. We skip to Abraham and the cities  
 of Sodom and Gomorrah (and if you read the old  
 testament and the prophet writings, God doesn't  
 have much love for cities---see Babel, Nineveh,  
 even Jerusalem in Lamentations...). For heaven's  
 sake, Abraham is \*negotiating\* with God. If  
 there are 50 righteous people, the city will be  
 spared. OK, if there are 10 righteous people the  
 city will be spared. In the end, Abraham can't  
 round up the necessary few, but even there, Lot  
 and his daughters are saved.*

*We come to this phrase, peppered through the  
 bible. Leviticus 19 is the easiest source: "The  
 stranger who sojourns with you shall be as a  
 native from among you, and you shall love him as  
 yourself; for you were strangers in the land of  
 Egypt. I am the Lord, your God." WHO were the  
 Israelites strangers to in Egypt. The Egyptians?  
 Not if you follow the Joseph story. I don't know if  
 any scholars have climbed onboard this leaky  
 boat with me, but I submit that the Israelites had  
 become strangers to GOD---that they had  
 forgotten the divine one and had lapsed. But this  
 time, does God scourge them? Nope. He  
 redeems them from Egypt, and keeps his  
 covenant with their forbears. My view? The story  
 here is how God himself/herself is transmuted  
 and changes, to a God who will, even as (s)he  
 weeps, wait endlessly to forgive his/her people.*

#### Exercise 12-1

I really hate it when people ask this question  
 (grin), because I honestly don't know. Let me  
 start with my formal definition of faith: It is the  
 medium by which my soul and my mind connect  
 to my purpose and God's purpose for me in the  
 world in which I live. It is my soul's nourishment  
 and the lifeblood of how I live.

My image of God is, I guess, the entity who cares  
 to the ultimate degree. When I'm in synagogue,  
 it isn't usually God the avenger, or God the judge  
 or God the worker of miracles. It is the God of  
 understanding and of knowing. And more than  
 anything, perhaps, God the teacher. Yes, I'd say  
 this image has been modeled by those I respect  
 the most---my parents, my rabbis, my best  
 friends---who I say have the ability to teach me  
 something about myself.

I am quite cautious of thinking of what others  
 might think of me, but it is my hope that my  
 circles of belonging are continuing to expand. I  
 always have room for new friends and new  
 people who share their lives.

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So I can't resist putting down some thoughts that  
 came out of my small-group book study  
 discussion. Here we go, then:

*\* we got off on a tangent---or I did---in small  
 group book study talking about Adam and Eve  
 and the forbidden fruit. It caused me to closely  
 read Genesis 2 and 3. I have my share of  
 misgivings---almost as much as the chapter on  
 the Akedah. So. God puts them in the garden  
 and says (in Twible-like terms) "eat, eat meine  
 kinde. But not \*that\* tree. Yes, THAT one." Let's  
 look at this. Does the serpent---or Eve---get a bad  
 rap? If God didn't want 'em to eat from the Tree  
 of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the solution is  
 simple. Don't put the tree in the garden. So....is  
 \*GOD\* the tempter? Maybe that's super-harsh,  
 but God is definitely in testing mode right from  
 the get-go. And would (s)he not know his/her  
 creatures? That if you tell a human not to do  
 something, it is the surest way to have her do it?*

*God said they would die. They don't. Only at a  
 kind of spiritual level---that the innocent (and  
 perfect?) Adam and Eve die. But what if God's  
 ultimate motivation was for them to, indeed, eat  
 from the fruit, \*understand\* the world's  
 imperfections and be brought into (OK perhaps  
 forced into) a partnership with God, to share the  
 burden of the imperfection and the work of the*

world. The concept *\*of\** work is introduced right here.

*The other thing that strikes me is to see how many of the commandments have their root in chapters 2, 3 and 4. Let's see---I am the Lord. Definitely here. No other Gods..yup...Adam listened to Eve and Eve to the serpent (OK, not explicitly a graven image, but you get the point). Honour the Sabbath, of course. Don't kill---Cain and Abel. Don't lie---Cain saying he doesn't know where his brother is. Don't steal – the fruit you were not supposed to touch. Don't covet --- the fruit you are not supposed to eat. Wow. That's a lot of them, eh?*

It is also super-interesting that our small-group book study is reading Chief Joseph's book Namwayut and the central tenet he's set out for us so far is that he came to the realization that he is lovable and loved by the universe.

#### Exercise 13-1

So I tend to shy away from the example. Genesis I is God the creator...and maybe God the explorer, the one who is making his/her first try at this. How about the God of potential? Genesis 3 is the God of "reality"? The God whose perfect plan has gone awry and who now must work to try to find a way back to that place, if at all. It is also the God of innocence as opposed to the God of experience perhaps. Innocence is lost in these early chapters---disobedience, temptation, murder, devolution from there. And finally---God the benign to God the teacher and tester, a pattern that will ensue for much of Genesis.

#### Exercise 13-2

Sorry everyone, I can't come up with much here, other than being frustrated at how much wrong is being perpetrated in the world today (and at a low level, wondering if I'm contributing in some way to it, thinking mostly on a white/racism side of things) and for Genesis 1, yes---seeing the best Thank you, Michael.

in people and, often as a result bringing out the best in people

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I mentioned in my Universal Christ notes that I like that statement a lot. I still do

I can agree with sailing---the feel of yourself on the boat on the water is calmly intoxicating

#### Exercise 14-1

What's really being asked here for me is to identify moments when you felt and were aware of being truly alive. An awed level of alive. For me, the day I played my keyboard in my friend Jim's studio while he sketched---that was a day I felt magically alive. The day I ate lunch on Dursey Island in the west of Ireland with only the sheep for company, that was a moment of being truly alive. The moment I held my friends' Andrea and Dave's 4-month old son James in my arms and he looked into my eyes and I was his whole universe. Awed alive.

#### Exercise 14-2

I do think all 3 of these experiences I've identified, I was conscious of almost being a vessel, an avatar of something else, and of a kind of responsibility and almost a calling to a greater something than myself. That I remember those moments signifies that I have been able to retain, at least a little, that sense of greater-than-me.

I have crystallized that lately in a saying that I may have noted in our last book and will repeat again. I don't always succeed at this every day, but I *\*am\** trying. I WOULD MUCH RATHER BE THE SMALLEST PART OF THE BIGGEST THING THAN THE BIGGEST PART OF THE SMALLEST PERSON. I really, really don't want to be the smallest person.

6. **Homework:** Here is our homework for next week as we read...

**Reflection #22: The Divine Feminine**

a. What words or images do you use to talk about your relationship with your mother?

b. In what ways do you experience the giving, nurturing, forgiving face of God?

c. In what ways do you feel drawn to give to, nurture and forgive others?

**Reflection #23: Our Eternal Yes**

a. Think of a time when you have taken on too much of another person's burden and have rescued them? How did it feel for you? How did that relationship develop?

b. Think of a time when someone else became too involved in your life—possibly crossing some personal boundaries in what they said or did. What was that experience like? How did this affect your attitude toward the other person.

c. What is the yes that is being asked of you at this moment? Where in your life might you receive what God is doing and hand it on to others through your presence, through 'pure being and not doing.'

**Reflection #24: Embodiment**

a. Engage in an embodied activity that you enjoy that will allow you to connect with your physical body.

b. Continue the activity until you experience a sense of appreciation for the life that inhabits your body. (See Note: page 100 about staying within your comfort zone.

**Reflection #25: Embodied Suffering**

a. Looking at yourself in the mirror, tell yourself at least ten things you love about who you are?

b. Please pray, journal or reach out to a trusted friend or mental health professional if you find this embodied exercise too challenging.

**Reflection #26: Atonement**

a. What were some of your earliest beliefs about why Jesus died on the cross? Do these still ring true for you today?

b. Take a moment to reflect on the view that the cross was a freely chosen revelation of total love on God's part (143) In what ways would it affect your view of God and your day to day experiences of God.

c. Reflect on a relationship in which you have been loving another person in a transactional way. What one practical change would you make to more deeply express your transformational love for them?

**Reflection #27: Restoration**

a. Do you tend to see the world more from the quid pro quo retributive perspective of punishing, weighing and counting or the grace-filled perspective of healing and restoration."

b. In what ways do you scapegoat others or unknowingly demand their suffering and punishment before acknowledging your own faults?

Michael's Challenge: Write you own obituary.

## 7. Final Thoughts:

- a. Every One and Every Thing is Sacred.
- b. “There is no guarantee. Check lists don’t work.... Let go and enjoy life now.”

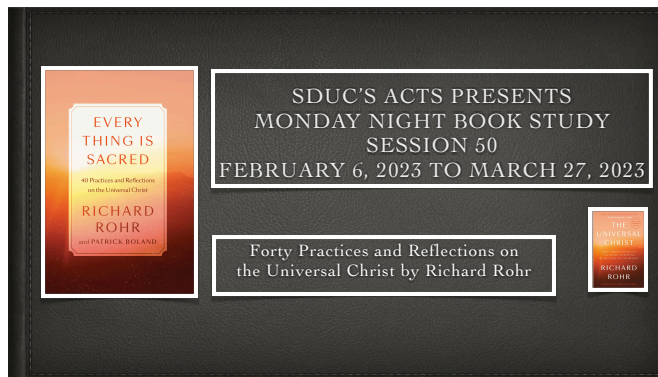
Happy journalling!

Thoughtfully yours,

Brenda (have a great week!)



OPIE, Fr. Richard's Dog



See [sduc.ca](http://sduc.ca) — Click on Ministries and on the second line is our page for ACTS and the slides for each week along with Pause to Consider which is sent out on Tuesday. See you next week.