

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation



The Universal Pattern

Christianity can help us realize that death and resurrection are part of the evolutionary path toward wholeness; letting go of isolated existence for the sake of deeper union. –Ilia Delio ([Sunday](#))

It is largely *after the fact* that faith is formed—and gloriously transmuted into hope for the future. Only *after the fact* can you see that you were being held and led *during* the fact. ([Monday](#))

The genius of Jesus' teaching is that he reveals that God uses tragedy, suffering, pain, betrayal, and death itself, not to wound us but, in fact, to bring us to a Larger Identity: "Unless the single grain of wheat loses its shell, it remains just a single grain" (John 12:24). ([Tuesday](#))

If we understand suffering to be *whenever we are not in control*, then we see why some form of suffering is absolutely necessary to teach us how to live beyond the illusion of control and to give that control back to God and the flow of reality. ([Wednesday](#))

The journey to the wellsprings of hope is really a journey toward the center, toward the innermost ground of our being where we meet and are met by God. –Cynthia Bourgeault ([Thursday](#))

A life of inner union, a contemplative life, is practicing for heaven now. ([Friday](#))

Practice: **Forest Bathing**

“The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician.” –Paracelsus [1]

Recently, in reference to concerns about COVID-19, I said, “Love always means going beyond yourself to otherness.” [2] African American mystic Howard Thurman understood this deeply through a connection with nature which provided him with “a certain overriding immunity against the pains in life.” [3] In his youth he found solace in a relationship with a tree near his home. He writes:

Eventually I discovered that the oak tree and I had a unique relationship. I could sit, my back against its trunk, and feel the same peace that would come to me in my bed at night. I could reach down into the quiet places of my spirit, take out my bruises and joys, unfold them and talk about them. I could talk aloud to the oak tree and know that I was understood. It too, was part of my reality, like the woods . . . giving me space. [4]

During this time of social distancing from other humans, it is still possible for some of us to practice “ecotherapy” or in Japanese, Shinrin-yoku—refreshment and healing by walking or resting where there are trees or forests. For those who don’t have access to nature currently, I hope you will have an opportunity soon. I also have a feeling we will all have a newfound appreciation for the outdoors when this time of “sheltering in” is over. From M. Amos Clifford’s book Your Guide to Forest Bathing:

The invitation is simple: Walk slowly [or sit still], while silently noticing what is in motion in the forest. There is always movement, even when things seem perfectly still. Strands of a web drift in the air, trees move in the breezes, birds fly by, and squirrels scramble in the branches, grasses bend, insects crawl. . . .

Until you become accustomed to it, walking slowly for more than a few minutes is, paradoxically, stressful. . . . Because the mind and body are a single entity, slowing our body will also calm our mind. . . .

The eternal movement of the forest gives our minds something to engage with. Just as with sitting meditation the breath is always there and available for watching, in the forest there are always things in motion. Your mind will drift, and many other thoughts will arise. When they do, gently bring your attention back to noticing what's in motion.

When you find you have automatically sped up, come to a complete halt for a moment. It's an opportunity to fully give your attention to one thing, noticing how that thing is in motion. After a brief pause you'll be ready to continue your slow walk.

I recommend that you walk like this for at least 15 minutes. That’s enough time for your mind to go through several cycles of distraction and calming. [5]

[1] Paracelsus, *Selected Writings* (Princeton University Press: 1988), 50.

[2] Richard Rohr, "Love Alone Overcomes Fear: A Message from Richard Rohr about COVID-19," Center for Action and Contemplation (March 19, 2020), <https://cac.org/love-alone-overcomes-fear-2020-03-19/>

[3] Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (Harcourt Brace: 1979), 8.

[4] *Ibid.*, 9

[5] M. Amos Clifford, *Your Guide to Forest Bathing: Experience the Healing Power of Nature* (Conari Press: 2018), 34–35.

Image credit: *Wheat Field With Crows* (detail), Vincent van Gogh, 1890, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

News from the CAC

What Do We Do with Evil?

Examine your notion of evil with a contemplative, nondual mind to reflect on ways we are complicit in social and systemic evil. In [What Do We Do With Evil?](#), Richard Rohr challenges readers to look beyond personal moral failure, increase personal responsibility and promote human solidarity.

Turning to the Mystics Podcast

Leaning into the lives of the mystics can be a gateway to hope, healing and oneness, especially during times of personal struggle and collective crisis. Join James Finley as he unpacks the wisdom of Thomas Merton in a way poignant and relevant to the times we live. New episodes of [Turning to the Mystics](#) release each week.

Action & Contemplation

2020 Daily Meditations Theme

What does God ask of us? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. —Micah 6:8

Franciscan Richard Rohr founded the Center for Action and Contemplation in 1987 because he saw a deep need for the integration of both action and contemplation. If we pray but don't act justly, our faith won't bear fruit. And without contemplation, activists burn out and even well-intended actions can cause more harm than good. In today's religious, environmental, and political climate our compassionate engagement is urgent and vital.

In this year's Daily Meditations, Father Richard helps us learn the dance of action and contemplation. Each week builds on previous topics, but you can join at any time! Click the video to learn more about the theme and to find reflections you may have missed.

