

PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

RICHARD ROHR

Richard Rohr names how fear diminishes our ability to love and forgive:

Jesus came to resolve the central and essential problem of hate. We've produced so much utopian talk about Jesus and love, we've forgotten Jesus had a very hard time getting to the issue of love. First, he had to expose and destroy the phenomenon of hatred. Once he exposed the lie and illusion of hate, love could show itself clearly—and it did.

The pattern, unfortunately, remains the same. Hate, it seems, is the ordinary, daily agenda. Love is the way out of this ordinary programming. The Gospels present the dilemma in a personal narrative that grounds the whole issue in history and in one man's enlightened response to the human situation. Jesus accepts the religious and social judgment of hate and publicly bears the consequences, but in an utterly new and transforming way that reveals new patterns and possibilities. For two thousand years, he has remained the most striking icon of a possible new agenda. His death exposed the lie and the problem. His risen life tells people their lives could have a different story line. He didn't just give us textbook answers from a distance; he personally walked through the process and said, "Follow me."

I believe fear is almost always behind hate. Sometimes it looks like control, but even then, people are usually just afraid of losing something they think they have. It is almost always unrecognized or unaddressed fear that justifies hatred. The best and most convincing disguise for fear is seeming virtue, or godliness. Then it never looks like fear. It looks like reason, prudence, common sense, intelligence, the need for social order, morality, religion, obedience, justice, or even spirituality. It always works. *"Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light"* (2 Corinthians 11:14, NRSV). What better way to veil vengeance than to call it justice?

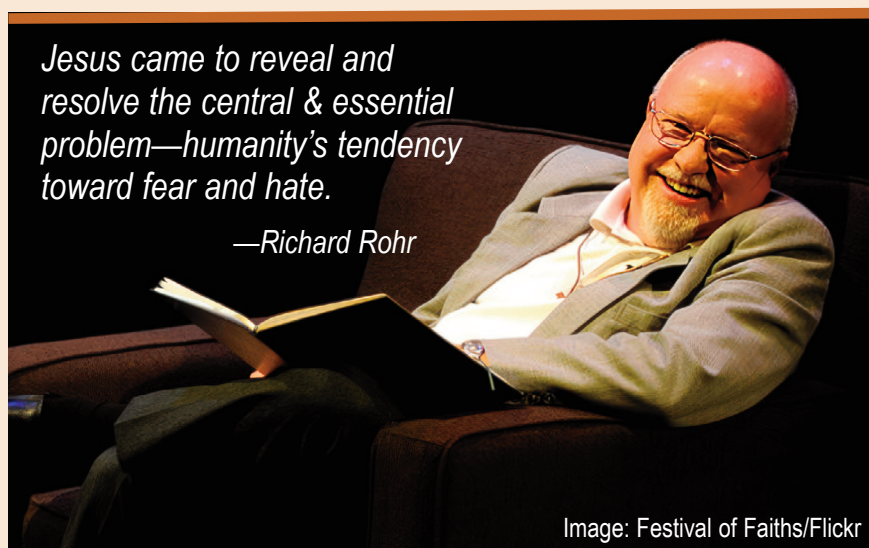
Only people who have moved beyond their wounded ego and the need to control all outcomes, only those practiced at letting go, can see fear for the impostor that it is. To be trapped inside of our small ego is always to be afraid. Great religion tries its best to free individuals from the tyranny of their small and fragile selves. It always points toward a larger identity that we call the Godself, the True Self, the self "hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3), the trustworthy Lover. Healthy and true religion, like Jesus himself modeled, tells us there is Someone we can trust.

Jesus came to reveal and resolve the central and essential problem—humanity's tendency toward fear and hate.

Love is the totally enlightened, entirely nonsensical way out of this pattern. Love has to be worked toward, received, and enjoyed; the first move is to recognize our deep capacity for fear and hate. But remember, we gather around the negative space quickly, while we "fall into" love rather slowly, and only with lots of practice at falling.

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Adapted from Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations. ©Center for Action and Contemplation. UBP.



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—Richard Rohr

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