

ANOTHER NAME FOR EVERY THING

with

RICHARD ROHR

Season 2, Episode 5

Non-Duality in Relationships,
Community, and Religion (Part 2)

Paul Swanson: Welcome to season two of Another Name for Every Thing: casual conversations with Richard Rohr responding to listener questions from his new book, The Universal Christ and season one of this podcast.

Brie Stoner: As mentioned previously, this podcast was recorded on the grounds of the Center for Action and Contemplation and may contain the quirky sounds of our neighborhood and setting. We are your hosts. I'm Brie Stoner.

Paul Swanson: And I'm Paul Swanson.

Brie Swanson: We're staff members of the Center for Action and Contemplation and students of this contemplative path, trying our best to live the wisdom of this tradition amidst juggling jobs, waiting in line for The Avengers movie, and the shifting state of our world.

Paul Swanson: This is the fifth of twelve weekly episodes. Today we're tackling your questions on the theme of Non-duality: Including and Transcending in relationships, community, and religion. We split this theme into two episodes. This is the second part of this conversation.

Brie Stoner: Well, speaking of power and clergy, would it be all right if I combined two questions that women have brought up of feeling as a real impediment to staying in the community known as Christianity?

Richard Rohr: All right.

Brie Stoner: There's a question from Laura in Oregon who talks about:

Being almost a 60-year-old cradle Catholic woman who has been in spiritual direction for many years, my question is what about us and women like me? We're angry. We're hurt. We're frustrated by our church. We're in the stage of life where we feel like we're doing the work of the second half of life, but we're not even heard by our church. I have left and returned over and over again. I'm not alone. Many of my friends have left and our daughters have left as well. Where do we go for the next twenty years?

And she's referring to your statement that maybe it would take twenty years for the Catholic Church to be ordaining women. And Erica from Phoenix asks a similar question where she says:

I come from an explicitly patriarchal background [in Mormonism, in her case], And one of my great spiritual struggles of the last five years has been to try to rewrite the negative associations of a punitive, patriarchal God in my heart and mind. As I've begun connecting with the feminine side of God through Richard's teachings about Christ's feminine soul and by participating in women's circles, I feel the lack of feminine God in my religion even more. Not only is the female side of God not present, but it's taboo. How can women find ways to connect with this feminine side of God while we wait the twenty to fifty years it will likely take our religions to begin embracing the feminine divine while not passing on patriarchy to our kids?

Both of these questions were just two examples of so many women who wrote in and said, "What? How are we supposed to continue participating in a religion that essentially

continues to dismiss us and devalue us as not being worthy of being vessels of God”?

Richard Rohr: This is huge; huge. I think women need some real feminine elders. And, and by that, I do not mean simply seeking priesthood because priesthood, more often than not at this point, is going to be buying this whole notion of Christianity that has to go, in my opinion, in its present form, but this is why we're so eager to follow, read, allow different pieces of theater, and novels, and writings, and poetry written by women. In this sifting process, women elders are going to emerge. Maya Angelou was one for many black women; you didn't have to be black.

Brie Stoner: Clarissa Pinkola Estes' *Women Who Run with the Wolves* is another clear one.

Richard Rohr: Yes. Yes. I wrote her a few months back. We can't simply think that the angry woman is the answer, even though she must go through that. She must be allowed that, but that's still disorder. How can we allow women to go through the disorder stage of a necessary anger, a necessary cynicism about all patriarchy and all Christianity, and then come back with a softened heart toward everybody? That's an elder. And, we have to allow such women like that to emerge. The only way they're going to emerge is by breaking the rules. And they're only going to be allowed to break the rules by leaving our presently constructed Sunday system.

And what they have to be careful about—and this is just my opinion—is not replicating the same system in feminine form. The reform we're asking for is much more radical than feminizing the Christianity as we have known it. And we've seen some—we haven't seen a lot to be honest—but some first-generation women priests who bought the whole system as it is, and want to dress up, and want to have power, and want to be right, that's exactly not the Gospel.

But I have to say, most of the women ministers I've met have not been that way. They're doing it in a different way. They're walking a very thin path of, “Okay, I can wear the clothes, accept the title, do the liturgy,” if your denomination has that, “but do it in a more maternal, healing, transformative way.” So, have courage women, and go to the angry point. I think it's a necessary thing for a while, but don't stay there. And you can spot the cynic in the first ten minutes, you know, when their underlying energy is still cynicism—need to prove I'm right; need to have my wounds healed, and you can tell they haven't been healed yet. When you're still playing the victim too much, or at all, playing the victim isn't good: “This is what patriarchy did to me. This is what the Catholic Church, the Baptist Church, did to me.” You better name that. You better feel that. You better suffer that. And you better be healed from that.

So, that's what I mean by disorder leading to the reordered stage. These are the years where that must be allowed, and that must be risked, and all the insecurity that comes with it, because now I'm not sure of a paycheck. Now I'm not sure of public status. Now I'm not sure of the denomination ordaining me or affiliating with me. But again, I have met so many ordained women in the Episcopal Church, Methodist Church, who somehow walked that narrow road. They're not angry; their healing presence; femininity at its best.

Brie Stoner: Well, I think you name it well by exhorting the need for courage, because I do think we are

living in a time where I appreciate your distinction. I appreciate that you're saying that the path for feminine leadership necessarily needs to look differently than what it has looked like in the patriarchal structure. And I think about my own journey, part of what allowed me to relax my anger and cynicism is some of the historical work that's been done around Mary Magdalene that you bring up in your own book. The recognition that, you know, historically we may have missed a big, critical, important chunk of who Jesus was in being so counter-cultural and so revolutionary, and to be such a seer of soul that he may have completely entrusted many women, plural, but you know, one woman in particular, as his disciple,

Paul Swanson: Right.

Brie Stoner: It's shocking to me that we've missed that—

Richard Rohr: It really is. It's chosen ignorance at this point.

Brie Stoner: --that we've missed the central role—Yeah. That right there at the center of the gospels was this courageous woman. And I think that, you know, the center is doing some work around that with an online course on Mary Magdalene, which was really helpful, but I also appreciate, Richard, that you're naming artists. You're saying, "Maybe this path of leadership and Christianity is going to look like the poets. It's going to look like the storytellers."

Paul Swanson: Right. I think, too, we just lost Rachel Held Evans—

Richard Rohr: Oh, yes.

Paul Swanson: --as someone who walked that path and was that redeeming even prophetic voice—

Richard Rohr: [inaudible] another young—

Paul Swanson: --in the evangelical world. And, like, what a model of someone who's—

Richard Rohr: Yes. Yes.

Paul Swanson: --who's holding and towing that line of embodied power and wisdom.

Richard Rohr: When will we get that the Gospel is woundedness healed, not woundedness avoided? And the people who have gone into the fire and come out of it positive and hopeful again, not cynical and angry at a high level? This is the work of grace' unique work of grace. But, when those women emerge in even greater numbers than they already have, I think we will have an argument for female ordination that has become so strong, it will be hard to deny.

Brie Stoner: I think we're already there, you know, but I think that's part of the grief of recognizing the institutions are too slow, and they are, as you've said, too big to fail, but I find so much hope in the examples of women who are leading in a different way. And also to just address the concern of one of the questions about how do we not pass it on to our kids, I think that the invitation to courage, Richard, is what allows me as a

mother to imagine new ways of talking about the Gospel with my kids; new ways of allowing them to experience God in nature, which is inherently feminine—

Richard Rohr: Mother Earth.

Brie Stoner: --to make a point to refer to God and many pronouns. I mean, these are all small steps that we can take as parents, but I think they make such a huge impact in the long term. Having just recently celebrated Easter with my kids, the fact that there was a Mary Magdalene movie that came out right around the same time, it was just amazing, because I sat and watched it with my kids, and they now—

Richard Rohr: Your little boys watched it, huh?

Brie Stoner: Yes, they did, and it now has given them-- You talk about the importance of personification.

Richard Rohr: Yes. Yes.

Brie Stoner: They now have this visual of this bad-ass disciple who was courageous, who was there, who was willing to give everything to live this message of love out. And I think all I can do is keep planting those seeds, knowing and trusting that the next generations are going to get it better than we did.

Paul Swanson: Uh-huh. I think there's a message, too, to the men as well, that this is not just the mantle that women should be taking upon their own, that men also need to support and at times step down—

Richard Rohr: And get out of the way.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. --to be able to allow a flourishing. I don't mean to allow from a power stance but like to support it. It's coming and it's happening, and let's celebrate that versus trying to maintain a status quo that is so old and rickety in a way.

Richard Rohr: Yes.

Brie Stoner: And I think kind of as a final point to this topic—

Richard Rohr: They're good points. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Brie Stoner: --is the recognition of the fact that patriarchy hurts us all.

Richard Rohr: Including the patriarch.

Brie Stoner: Yes, including—

Richard Rohr: Maybe most especially.

Brie Stoner: Yes. I think it's an important part of our healing and, hopefully, our cultural transitioning is to see the wounds that have been created in this for men as well; the limitations, and the storylines, and the damage that it creates for everybody, and I

think that's also part of what allows us to relax from the grief and the pain that we carry toward our institutional churches.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. That'll preach. And so, shifting with these kinds of ideas of new leadership and new flourishing, there's a question from Patty about community. She says:

In the episode where you talked about the Church, I often don't see the Universal Christ in many people—

Wait. How am I saying this? Maybe it's just the way it's written. Let me start over.

Brie Stoner: "You talked about how the Church often doesn't see the Universal Christ."

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Brie Stoner: "Many people who aren't churched, do."

Paul Swanson: Yes, that's right. Okay. There we go.

So many people in the Church don't see the Universal Christ and many people who aren't churched, do. I want to know how do we find community with others who see and love the Universal Christ? I think community is important in my experience at the conference. [I'm guessing she's referencing the Universal Christ Conference] confirmed that intuition, but when I returned to my rural area, I was without much support.

Richard Rohr: Maybe the first thing I'd have to say, is it doesn't have to be called "Christ" by these people. It probably won't be. You know, when I went down to the border last month and stopped at several different refugee centers, we were told our only preaching allowed here, because so many people come in wanting to save these poor refugees who are merely surviving, is what we do for them. Now, several of them were very Catholic. They had statues of Jesus and statues of Mary, but they said the statues stand there so we don't have to verbally lay any kind of message on people beyond being Jesus instead of talking about Jesus. And they were real clear about that: there is to be no preaching to people. So, if you can accept that first of all, then you're going to have the eyes to see Christ in people who don't use Christ language and people who don't say it our way at all. But you just see them as people inside the flow that "Why are they caring about this cause at such great length," you know?

As you all know, I like to watch nature shows and there are two different levels. There's these vet shows of vets who just will go out of their way to take care of a little wounded parrot. You know, this softens my heart to see this caring for a parrot. And then at the bigger level, there's one on the Bronx Zoo, maybe you've seen it, and whole teams of people caring for kangaroos, or giraffes, or whatever it might be, but urgently concerned about improving their life so that this species can continue, and they found some strange bird from Madagascar. There's only four of them left. Now, why would you care about a bird from Madagascar? That's a caring, that isn't logical. It isn't a sensical even, you know, and I must say it's usually women, not always, two-thirds of the teams seem to be women caring about these birds and these animals. That's Christ energy. If it's caring energy, if it's out-flowing energy, it's Christ. So, we have to get away from our idolatry of words and learn how to recognize energies. That is not New Age; that's the Holy Spirit. If you can't recognize

energies, you can't recognize the Holy Spirit. Really! Why are we so tied to our words, and people who use our words?

So, I think that's the best answer I can give to that. If you can disconnect yourself from people who use your words and start recognizing where the flow is at, where the spirit is flowing, I think you'll find there's a lot of places you can create church. Maybe you have to join the Bronx Zoo. I don't know.

Brie Stoner: Join an animal initiative.

Richard Rohr: Once you see it, it's common sense, but I know that's me talking. Maybe other people don't see it that way. But I've met too many people in church where there is no flow.

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Brie Stoner: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: They can't be extracted from the third pew at the eight o'clock mass every Sunday morning, you know? And if someone else is sitting there, they glare at them. This is not flow. This is not the future.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. This is bringing up a story for me. When I was in grad school, I was looking at a Catholic Worker House while I was working on my master's. And when I was taking my doctrinal class, I just fell in love with the doctrine of the Trinity.

Richard Rohr: Did you?

Paul Swanson: Just like heels over head.

Richard Rohr: You didn't need me, see?

Paul Swanson: Well, you helped give that shape to it. And I remember after that particular class, going back to the Catholic Worker House where you have the guests who are all men, who are homeless and in between spaces, and I was asked to pray over the meal, and I gave the most beautiful Trinitarian doctrinally, just, correct, and after I was done, one of the guests said to me, "Paul, do you know what I pray for?" I was like, Oh, really touched his heart, you know, like the Trinity is flowing through me to him, and he said, "I pray that my boss gets killed this weekend" because of the oppressive work that she was putting on him. And what I recognized in that moment was I was letting the language, even though it was all correct, but I was not in the flow with him.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. Yeah. That's the way to put it. Yeah.

Paul Swanson: I was trying to prove it to put it my language and put it upon him versus just participating where we were at in that flow. That lesson of the Trinity hit me in the face harder than anything else I've learned in any classroom.

Richard Rohr: I remember a similar experience as young priest using the word "glory," and someone said to me, "You know, nobody uses that word. What does it mean, glory?" I said, "Yeah, I guess it isn't helpful." And he wasn't being unkind, or anything, but "We don't know what you're

talking about when you talk about glory.” Maybe you say they should, but to love people is to accept them where they’re at. Nothing else is going to feel like love. So, do you really care for that person, or do you not? Is your job to get them where you’re at or to meet them where they’re at? And I think that’s the reason Jesus has his ministry all being itinerant, on the move, not setting up an office and hanging a shingle so you come to us. I mean this is pretty clear in the whole New Testament. He is on the road moving into different worlds. And our notion of church is just the opposite. We build a big building, come to us. And I’m not saying that makes it wrong, but it has created a mindset that we’ve got it, and you don’t, and come to us and we’ll give it to you like it’s a product. Oh, I don’t know how we’re going to turn this around. It’s already being turned around in the 12 Step movement, and in so many of these smaller movements that care about the growth, and the change, and the healing of people. Yeah.

Brie Stoner: This brings up a question about our preciousness about our religious institutions though. You know in some ways, it’s like how do we maintain the edge of the inside while moving forward and letting go of some of what hasn’t been as helpful? How do we create community in a new way, I guess? And Paul from the UK asks that question. He says:

I think the next step forward for contemplatives is developing community. I think it is so important that we do this, however, without falling into traps of formalized religion, helping, praying, eating, spiritual direction, socializing with each other. Has Father Richard any suggestions how this could be implicated? I would love to see a future where we have at least one lay contemplative community in each city, town around the world that anyone of any belief or need, can call upon.

Richard Rohr: As long as that contemplative community is encouraging people to help, pray, eat, spiritually, direct people in other communities instead of the whole goal being come and join our community. You know, this is very ironic. The only church in the world where I ever preached where there were a whole bunch of Muslims in full dress sitting in the front row was in Leeds, England, where this man is from and it was due to the wonderful minister who was there who himself loved Islamic people and went to their services, and he said, “You don’t need to be afraid of Richard Rohr.” And there they were, but I have to admit I was a little intimidated although he told me, “You don’t need to be afraid of them, but the full outfits, this was not my world that I was familiar with, and I still was afraid I’d use words that would offend them, or use words that they wouldn’t understand, but it was in the very city that Paul is from here. How interesting.

So, what if we had churches that really gave as our commission, “Next Sunday, don’t come back here, but you go to the Methodist, you go to the Lutheran, you go to the mosque, and that’s your church next week. If we could as ministers legitimate that, wow! Until we start meeting the other, I don’t know what good religion is going to do for the world. It’s always creating these closed groups. And I know we all like our closed group, but this isn’t getting us anywhere. It really isn’t.

So, Paul is asking the right question. And the magical name, Paul, they just always just steps ahead of everybody else. (We have two Paul’s in the room here.) I think it is so important that we do this without falling into traps of formalized religion. I’d add to that “localized religion.” Keep picturing Jesus sending the apostles. Now. I know this seems strange. Here

I am a Catholic priest. I have mass here on the corner Sunday morning. I did say this, ironically, something like this, the last two Sundays— Go ahead.

Paul Swanson: I was recording something with Jim Finley for the Living School the other week, and he said, you know, “When you start following that Christ energy, you start seeing what Rahner called ‘hidden Christians everywhere.’”

Richard Rohr: Yes.

Paul Swanson: But you also have to be okay with the fact that Hindus might be seeing you as a hidden Hindu—

Richard Rohr: Hidden Hindu.

Paul Swanson: --in that same way where you can honor the way that they see you. Well, hopefully they can honor the way that you are seeing them participate in that same mystery.

Richard Rohr: Uh-huh.

Brie Stoner: I want to ask as well as we’re kind of beginning to wrap up this episode, is the need for belonging. I think in our postmodern society, all of our institutions have or are in the midst of collapsing.

Richard Rohr: They really are. That’s not being rude, crude, or dishonest.

Brie Stoner: No. They really are, and it’s just what it is, but I think that part of what’s happening then is that there’s a real absence of communities of belonging, and people are craving that. They’re missing that. They’re harkening back in a nostalgic way to the days when church was Church, and community was Community. And so, I think, I just want to name that to say that I think this is a very real need that we have as human beings, and that we’re in a liminal space where that need isn’t directly or clearly met in the ways that it was before.

Paul Swanson: Uh-huh.

Brie Stoner: I don’t know that I have a question except to state that—

Richard Rohr: No, that’s good.

Brie Stoner: --and see if that resonates, because I do feel that’s part of why we feel so torn about Church.

Richard Rohr: The need for community in this lonely, isolated, individualistic culture is so deep that bars have become community. Rock concerts have become community. Theater going has become community. “Well, here’s some like-minded people who enjoy it. I feel safe because we all go to the theater,” or whatever your community might be. But, if we don’t recognize that’s what’s happening, I don’t think we’ll be able to be patient with a lot of people who, frankly, aren’t looking for God, which I’d call the waking-up level, the third level. They’re still at the growing-up level, which is finding out who I am, and I got to find out what’s good about being a young man with tattoos and who likes rock concerts. Now, the trouble is just as I’m going to critique the Church for so often staying at the cleaning-up level, a lot of people stay there through rock concerts and bars, I can equally criticize them. Is there

anything beyond your rock concert and your fellow tattooed friends—

Brie Stoner: The people who are like you. Is there anything beyond—

Richard Rohr: The people who are like you, that you're always creating sameness again, and I only feel safe inside of sameness. If the guy with the tattoo—nothing against tattoos—

Brie Stoner: You're really going for the tattoos, Richard. Are you saying you want to get one later, or what?

Richard Rohr: --can't love little white ladies who still hate gay people, or whatever it is, he isn't grown up either. Yeah. So, we've got to preach this same Universal Christ, the same universal Gospel equally to everybody. And it's equally offensive to all of us, because it tells us to meet the other, and it's in meeting the other that you meet the Christ when you allow him to be precisely other and don't try pulling him into me, or we, knowing that we is just usually an extension of me.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I think, too, another teacher that we just lost, Jean Vanier—

Brie Stoner: I was just thinking about him. Yeah.

Paul Swanson: --of the vulnerability of belonging and the conditions that he was helping create.

Richard Rohr: Brilliantly.

Paul Swanson: --but included all the stages, right, like from those who were living there, from those who were supporting presences, and—

Richard Rohr: Very good. He was never judgmental.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I wonder if you could speak to his presence in that, as well—

Richard Rohr: That's perfect—

Paul Swanson: --about creating community?

Richard Rohr: --with him just passing. I told you, didn't I, that I lived with him for a week?

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: And I saw that holiness, that humility, that receptivity. I mean, he was even equally forgiving and accepting of me. I was so young then, this hot shot priest from America, but he didn't judge me, either. I hope I wasn't too hot shot, but I got to be good friends with his mother, because I saw that her ability to be very maternal must be the energy that first made him the man he is today.

So, I actually spent more time with her than I did with him that week. But it was an entire community that sort of oozed love, and yet, boy, they didn't compromise their Catholic Eucharistic faith. The Eucharist was exposed in a beautiful little chapel filled with candles. I saw these people going in and out of that little chapel all day. So, they didn't compromise at

all on the contemplative part of the action and contemplation. And yet, much of the rest of the day was working with people who, frankly, were difficult to work with—the disabled; the mentally limited, if I can say that? I had to ask myself that whole week, “Could I do this”?

My world travels would probably make it a very small world for me. Could I just be happy here living with Adam, which is the one that Henry Nouwen connected with? I am not sure I could. So, it made me aware of my littleness, my poverty. It was my inability to do what they were doing. So, I think it’s experiences like that, which help us all to recognize many gifts, many ministries. I could honor and love theirs because they so totally welcomed and honored mine. It was a community of love. How many in the world now?

Paul Swanson: So many. It’s hard for me even to know. I know they’re all over the globe.

Richard Rohr: I heard sixty at one point.

Paul Swanson: Wow.

Richard Rohr: I think it’s gone higher than that. Yeah. L’Arche, they saw themselves as the arc on the waves of history, carrying the truth of love. Amazing. Amazing.

Paul Swanson: I think it really does speak to the way that community can look different from what I think that folks—

Richard Rohr: Very good.

Paul Swanson: --tried to create when it has to be this progressive, it has to use this kind of cool name, or whatever, but to really go to where the vulnerability of the world is that we can all connect to? That will often create community in a much more authentic way, I think, than rallying around CrossFit or the way that other communities are, like you’re saying, are sparking up around theater groups or fitness centers, or bars, fitness centers.

Richard Rohr: Fitness centers, that’s another one.

Paul Swanson: There’s something that’s really true about going to the vulnerable places that bring us together.

Brie Swanson: Right. Well, and it just is such an embodiment of Jesus’s entire message, which is the Kingdom of God is encountered in the purity of love experienced with the other, and the other being those who are most marginalized and excluded from our society. Those who are most vulnerable have so much to teach us, and they have so much to gift us with in terms of the eyes to see, the hearts to perceive, and the capacity to live in a completely different way, like to rewire how we think, you know. I think that my own limited experiences of those kinds of encounters have rendered me a completely different person than who I was before, and that that is the wonder of that connecting to the other. And I appreciate the distinction you’re making, Richard, which is that, you know, popular community is oriented entirely toward how can I find the people who are exactly like me?

Richard Rohr: Self growth.

Brie Stoner: And I think what you're saying is let's not make the same mistake with this concept of the Universal Christ or even contemplation. Let's not just run toward everybody who's like us, you know? If you're a millennial listening to this, don't just run to the other millennials who are reading the Universal Christ and want to have a prayer sit, like, how can we move toward inclusion of otherness as what we're doing?

Richard Rohr: When we make the doorway vulnerability, let's just use that word, it's what Francis was trying to do by going down and living with the lepers, you gather a completely different kind of clientele. And I'm not accusing mega-churches, but I do almost have to use that as a contrast, when it's all beautiful, white, successful, singing, happy people, the doorway is pretty wide. And I'm not saying those are bad people, but you're going to get a whole different notion of church. When you make it the access point, what we Franciscans call "poverty," you gather some mighty people, and I know the L'Arche communities I visited, that's what I've met, really solid people just sitting there with depth, and beauty, and conviction, invariably nonjudgmental, invariably no need of being showy. It really is a judgment on almost all the rest of us who've created a success-oriented religion, even spiritual success. And we each define spiritual success in our own way.

Brie Stoner: Yes. Exactly.

Richard Rohr: Oh, God. God must be so patient with us all.

Paul Swanson: In light of this conversation and thinking about the collective and how do we speak to this Universal Christ in a way that can unify, this question was interesting and came from Claudia in Kansas City about a new creed:

As I study more of your work, Richard, I get more unhappy with reciting the Nicene Creed at church. Have you thought about writing a creed that better expresses what it means to believe in the Universal Christ, or is there a creed out there that you like?

Richard Rohr: No.

Brie Stoner: Do it. Do it. Do it. [laughter]

Richard Rohr: Oh, I can totally agree. Just this past Sunday, they just mumbled through the Nicene Creed as fast as they could. So, I know this is having no effect on them or the world. It's just a lesson memorized, as Jesus says. And yet, the point of a creed is unity. So, she's probably asking a legitimate question. Are there a set of words that would allow people to unify? I think if I can dare say this as a Franciscan, I think for much of the Christian world, the so-called Prayer of St. Francis is one of those. There's nothing in here I can disagree with. There's nothing in here that I can't say isn't the Gospel: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace."

I'm not trying to get people to join my Franciscan club, but it's going to have to be of that nature. It won't be appealing to the head but to the behavior and the heart. And that's what the Peace Prayer of St. Francis does. Why would anybody fight this? But when you have words like "consubstantial with the Father,"—

Brie Stoner: Oh, my gosh.

Richard Rohr: --it's like, please, don't do this to humanity. You don't care about the person living in a little village in Africa or Latin America or you wouldn't talk that way. So, this is a creed for theologians, which they have a right to have.

Brie Stoner: And may I make the distinction it's a creed for male theologians.

Richard Rohr: That's right too. That's absolutely true.

Brie Stoner: I remember being at a conference with Ilia Delio where we were talking about the potentiality of the future of Christianity and evolution and where this could all go, and it was this wild, life-giving experience of imagining what could be possible, what could this look like, what if we need to let go of certain aspects of our religiosity? What if we don't need to be precious about our creeds and our words, you know?

Richard Rohr: Precious.

Brie Stoner: And then we ended the whole thing with a Catholic service where the Nicene Creed was being recited. I just stood there, and I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it. And I was just looking at Ilia, and she was saying it, because she's, you know, Ilia, and she's good, and non-dual, whatever, and she's looking at me and she kind of winked like knowingly. And I think in some ways what I feel Claudia pointing at is the fact that we forget that we're participating in this tradition. We, in our creeds, sometimes put a period at the end of the sentence that isn't really there. Maybe we do need to write new creeds. Maybe we do need to let the old creeds go. Maybe creeds aren't helpful. Maybe it's poetry that will say it better with the language of the heart. But either way, what I feel is that sense of there could be more, we could have something else to say now that there's more of us involved.

Richard Rohr: Sure.

Paul Swanson: Was it Gandhi who would read the Sermon on the Mount every morning?

Richard Rohr: Really? I know he loved it.

Paul Swanson: The ways to highlight other things as ways that we can speak to the heart, and the body, and to the mind that help us integrate these core themes. Right?

Richard Rohr: Well, the only time the Nicene Creed rang true to me was my first visit to Rome. Talk about the ultimate establishment church. And I went into this mammoth church and the huge organ was playing credo in Unum Deum, I believe in one God. And I was surrounded by Asians, and Africans, and Americans, and Latinos, and some with tears. This is Catholicism, you know. It was James Joyce, who said "Catholicism is 'here comes everybody.'" Now, that kind of Catholicism needs now to be named as Catholic and not in a mental way. But this is monotheism at its best: "I believe in one God." Oh, it was beautiful. Just beautiful. Precisely because the church was filled with people from all over the world, you know. But, then we probably all went back to our parochial little churches in Columbia and Indiana. That's the way it works. God is so patient. But thanks, Claudia, for saying this. You know, I'm from close to Kansas City, so you're my kind of world.

Paul Swanson: Well, thanks, Richard, for walking around all these different themes and so we try to imagine

what we can be and the potential of how we can participate in the Universal Christ. Thanks for being such a lightning rod, and wisdom keeper and seeker, with us. We really appreciate it.

[music playing]

Richard Rohr: I hope it helps somebody. That's all I can ever say: I hope it helps somebody. Thank you for being such good somebodies. Thank you.

Paul Swanson: Thanks, Richard. And that's it for today's episode of Another Name for Every Thing with Richard Rohr. This podcast is produced by the Center for Action and Contemplation thanks to the generosity of our donors.

Brie Stoner: The beautiful music you're listening to is provided by Birdtalker. If you're enjoying this podcast, consider rating it, writing a review, or sharing it with a friend to help create a bigger and more inclusive community. To learn more about Father Richard and to receive his free Daily Meditations in your electronic mailbox, visit cac.org.

Paul Swanson: To learn more about the themes of the Universal Christ, visit universalchrist.org.

Brie Stoner: From the high desert of New Mexico, we wish you peace and every good.