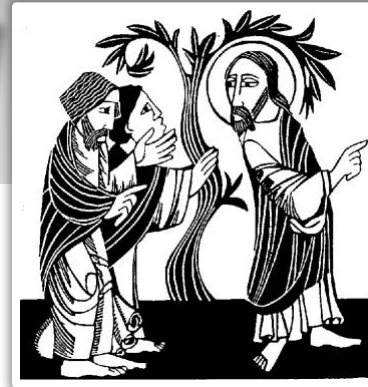


# St Martin's Reflections

5th April, Palm Sunday



## **Love Alone Overcomes Fear**

– A Meditation from Fr Richard Rohr, Director of the Centre for Action and Contemplation (CAC)

“It is shocking to think how much the world has changed in such a brief time. Each of us has had our lives and communities disrupted. Of course, I am here in this with you. I feel that I’m in no position to tell you how to feel or how to think, but there are a few things that come to mind I will share.

A few days ago I was encouraged by the Franciscans and by the leadership team here at the CAC to self-quarantine, so I’ve been in my little hermitage now for three or four days. I’ve had years of practice, literally, how to do what we are calling “social distancing.” I have a nice, large yard behind me where there are four huge, beautiful cottonwood trees, and so I walk my dog Opie every few hours.

Right now I’m trying to take in psychologically, spiritually, and personally, what is God trying to say? When I use that phrase, I’m not saying that God causes suffering to teach us good things. But God does use everything, and if God wanted us to experience global solidarity, I can’t think of a better way. We all have access to this suffering, and it bypasses race, gender, religion, and nation.

We are in the midst of a **highly teachable moment**. There’s no doubt that this period will be referred to for the rest of our lifetimes. We have a chance to go deep, and to go broad. Globally, we’re in this together. Depth is being forced on us by great suffering, which as I like to say, always leads to great love.

But for God to reach us, we have to allow suffering to wound us. Now is no time for an academic solidarity with the world. Real solidarity needs to be felt and suffered. That’s the real meaning of the word “suffer” – to allow someone else’s pain to influence us in a real way. We need to move beyond our own personal feelings and take in the whole. This, I must say, is one of the gifts of television: we can turn it on and see how people in countries other than our own are hurting. What is going to happen to those living in isolated places or for those who don’t have health care? Imagine the fragility of the most marginalized, of people in prisons, the homeless, or even the people performing necessary services, such as ambulance drivers, nurses, and doctors, risking their lives to keep society together? Our feelings of urgency and devastation are not exaggeration: they are responding to the real human situation. We’re not pushing the panic button; we are the panic button. And we have to allow these feelings, and invite God’s presence to hold and sustain us in a time of collective prayer and lament.

I hope this experience will force our attention outwards to the suffering of the most vulnerable. Love always means going beyond yourself to otherness. It takes two. There has to be the lover and the beloved. We must be stretched to an encounter with otherness, and only then do we know it’s love. This is what we call the subject-subject relationship. Love alone overcomes fear and is the true foundation that lasts (1 Corinthians 13:13).”

## Online Resources for Spiritual Growth

As we seem to have a little more time on our hands, and no physical church to gather at, I thought I would recommend some thinkers and teachers who have inspired me over the years, and encourage you to explore some of their works for yourselves. So, in no particular order:

### Fr Richard Rohr

Richard is an American Franciscan and Priest. He has written a prolific number of books and continues to engage afresh with the central truths of the Christian faith, but from a variety of beautiful angles. He is steeped as much in Buddhist traditions as he is in those of the Catholic church, and his reflections encourage those seeking for a kind, mature and relevant expression of Christian faith in today's world.

**Subscribe to his Daily Meditations:** <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>

**Recommended Podcast:** 'Another Name for Every Thing'

**Recommended Book:** 'Falling Upwards'

### Rachel Held-Evans

Another American, but Rachel came to her mature and affirming faith beginning from the other end of the Christian Spectrum. She was raised in a very Conservative Evangelical small town in the rural South of the USA, but transcended many of the confines of her youth to develop an egalitarian and deeply expressive faith. She writes beautifully on all aspects of the life of faith, but especially on the journey of women within the all too often male-dominated landscape of Christianity. Her reflections on the women of the Passion Narratives are especially powerful.

Rachel sadly died last year in her late 30s, leaving two infant children. Her legacy of blog-posts, books and articles will ensure her wit, wisdom and gentleness are treasured by Christians for years to come.

**Recommended Blog:** <https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/women-holy-week-1>

**Recommended Book:** 'Faith Unravelling'

### Dr Paula Gooder

Paula Gooder is a writer and lecturer in Biblical Studies. Her research areas focus on the writings of Paul the Apostle, with a particular focus on 2 Corinthians and on Paul's understanding of the Body. Her passion is to ignite people's enthusiasm for reading the Bible today, by presenting the best of biblical scholarship in an accessible and interesting way. She is currently the Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral in London.

**Recommended Website:** [www.gooder.me.uk](http://www.gooder.me.uk)

**Recommended Talks:** [www.gooder.me.uk/talks/](http://www.gooder.me.uk/talks/)

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