

FR. RICHARD ROHR, O.F.M.

Founder*, New Jerusalem Community

(*Or as Richard often says, "I didn't found New Jerusalem, it found me.")

In the early 1970s, young Franciscan priest Fr. Richard Rohr was named the head of the Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) retreat program in Cincinnati, Ohio, *and the rest, as they say, is history!*

It was on Nov. 6, 1971 at a TEC retreat for Roger Bacon High School boys that the Holy Spirit set in motion what was to become the New Jerusalem Community. Richard tells that astonishing story in his own words in a Zoom video on this website as part of our NJ 50th Anniversary celebration. Although he is known as New Jerusalem's founder, he is the first to say that it was the Spirit that founded the community. Initially, his teaching formed the faith of the teens who came in the hundreds, hungry to be a part of this extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit. Then came adults and families as the word spread about this young priest, his preaching and the young people who followed him.

Pastor, prophet, teacher and friend, Richard lived and modeled the life that he preached. He was part of the first men's household (a "household" was a group of members living under one roof, dedicated to the early church's vision of sharing all things in common). Eventually there were eighteen households, united in Christ-centered companionship, prayer, faith-sharing, caring for those in need, and holding all things in common.

Soon Richard's preaching and teaching were recorded, published, and made available to national and international audiences. People from around the world came to visit New Jerusalem to see how that teaching took actual shape in the lives of New Jerusalem Community members. Invitations quickly followed and he began to travel, preaching and teaching first around the country, and then around the world. New Jerusalem Community was the living laboratory of his teachings on the Scriptures, on community, on prayer as intimacy with God, on vibrant, action-oriented incarnational faith. Together we lived – and continue to live – the transforming reality of "God incarnate" revealing God's own self within ourselves, others, and in all of creation.

His travels took him to destinations directly impacted by repression, extreme poverty and injustice, and those experiences further shaped his preaching and teaching. He brought those stories home to New Jerusalem, where they took root and bore fruit in the community's commitments to efforts towards peace and justice.

His journey continued to unfold within New Jerusalem until his 1985 sabbatical at the Merton hermitage at Our Lady of Gethsemane Cistercian Monastery in Kentucky. His discernment there led him to depart New Jerusalem and Cincinnati in 1986 to found the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The CAC (www.cac.org) is grounded in the wisdom of Christian mysticism and its traditions of uniting action and contemplation for spiritual seekers and prophetic leaders. He provides a daily meditation through CAC and has published numerous recordings and books, including: *Everything Belongs, Just This, Falling Upward, and the Universal Christ*.

Richard will always be our beloved inspirator, who first taught us that *God doesn't love us because we're good; we're good because God loves us. We learned from him that God/Love is both source and goal; that faith is the slow journey of getting there; and that hope is the willingness to move forward without certainty, resolution or closure.* All of us who have called New Jerusalem home are profoundly grateful!

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