

# TRIBUTE – RICHARD ROHR

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NJC 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

NOVEMBER 7, 2021

I am not sure how I lucked out getting to be the one to give tribute to THE Richard Rohr, but I am going to just appreciate the honor. I feel like that is what you taught me. When we spent many a conversation getting to learn about the enneagram in the community, I always felt so cool that I was a one “just like Fr. Richard”. I thought I was in pretty good company with you and my Uncle Ron. You both taught me the importance of remaining humble, especially in a leadership position. I have the privilege of teaching Theology classes at Mercy McAuley high school now. I rely on your writings all the time. You have such a simple yet powerful way of explaining truths of our faith. Your words help me all the time to be ready for the questions I get.

So New Jerusalem started with teenagers—and when I was offered the chance to write a tribute to you, I realized what a good view I got of teenagers in NJ over the years. Although I came to NJ as a 2 year old with my parents and little sister Sharon, and thoroughly enjoyed growing up as a kid in the community, I eventually saw the older brothers and sisters of my friends come together as a youth group, and we all wanted to be like them. Then, I got to be a part of the awesome NJ Juniors with my sisters and friends, and sometime after, I got to help lead as a Youth group director for the next two groups of teenagers. There is just something special about being around teenagers. You must have really enjoyed being witness to that first group of New Jerusalem teenagers falling in love with the Gospel—so ready to let it change their lives. I just keep thinking “what if you hadn’t followed that path.?” “What would we all have missed out on?”

I want you to know what you created for all of us. Because you were willing to follow the truth of the Gospel and teach it to a bunch of teenagers who later had teenagers of their own, you created and encouraged a place where we got to experience so much:

Masses full of good songs, good praying, and good homilies, Retreats, fasting, friendships, singing, relationships begun and ended, road trips, eating meals together at the Center at the big glass diningroom table, praying together and telling stories up in the upper room, making meals in the kitchen, performing hit plays like Sir Oliver’s Song and Kids Praise, Marching for all sorts of justice issues downtown, walking and praying the Way of the Cross/Way of Justice on Good Friday...

Being prayed over before we left for CLOW-Children’s Liturgy of the Word, being prayed over before we did anything really...

Parties in the Portiuncula on a Saturday night and Mass right back in the same spot on Sunday morning

Community picnics, volleyball games and water balloon fights, mass held outside, late night Easter vigils

Learning that God could be experienced as a Father, and a Mother but ultimately our Creator

Singing some of the best church songs I’ve ever heard anywhere

Jingling our keys at mass, watching our parents pray in tongues and trying to explain that to our friends

Seeing men enjoy singing to God and always being kind and loving.

Experiencing women and mothers at the altar right along with the priest.

Using Liturgical dance as a form of prayer at mass.

Watching Brother Son Sister Moon for the first time with a community of people of all ages as we kids sat on the Port floor soaking in that incredible story of surrender, care for the poor and celebration of God's creation.

Living in neighborhood together AND learning how to let people move away.

What you started, what you taught, and how you lived created an atmosphere where all of this could happen. I can't imagine how different my life would be without my New Jerusalem experience.

As I have talked to my friends from NJ and my siblings, I have realized that while some of us knew you and some knew of you, we were all influenced by your understanding of God and people...

God does not love us because we are good, we are good because God loves us. You taught us that. You sent us out into the world with the belief that all people are made good. And that has affected how we treat all the people we encounter. You empowered us to be the Good Samaritans, to forgive 70 X 7 times, and to know Jesus as a real human being who felt pain and was deeply sad and despairing at times, and a human being who so enjoyed spending time with young people.

As some of us think back to memories we have growing up around you, these things come to mind...we liked your voice, when we think of you, we think of a Franciscan, you are like a shepherd, you listened, you were not overly smiley or overly serious, you gave us peace.

You are a true prophet we share with the world now, so how lucky are we to have been a part of the New J world you created!

Oh, how good, how wonderful, is the life that we shared.