

Session One // Running from Resurrection

Watch Film *Running from Resurrection* with Fr. Richard Rohr

<https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/running-from-resurrection>

Going Deeper

“It’s hard to sustain happiness. You have to work. You have to choose. You have to clear away the garbage. For some terrible reason, it’s almost diabolical...we are attracted to the negative.” —Fr. Richard Rohr

What does negativity bias look like for you? In other words, how does your heartache shape your assumptions about life?

When is the last time you experienced contentment? The last time you felt satisfaction?

Would you consider that resurrection is less of a one-time event and more of a process? That we can embrace quiet moments of intimate contemplation with our Creator that lead to these amazing shifts in perspective, attitude and action—and things we thought were once dead in us start coming to life?

How do you avoid resurrection? In what ways do you choose hell?

Spend some time being curious about your thoughts. See if you notice your recurring thought patterns or personal dramas. Maybe consider keeping a journal of them. Awareness is the beginning of understanding and change.

Anyone and anything can be our teacher. A chair, a tree, a friend, even an enemy. Who are your teachers? What can you appreciate about them?

As you consider Fr. Rohr’s words, observe your own mind. Is there a story or a person that drifts to mind? Verbally, or in writing, share the story. Where is the presence of the Divine in this story? Write a one-word prayer that describes your new hope for this relationship or circumstance. Referring to the neural grooves that new actions create in our brains, what new positive action will you practice regarding this relationship? (Mercy? Forgiveness? Peace?)

Reflection:

The gift of resurrection is commonly believed to be a one-time experience. Jesus was resurrected once, and then all the “good” Christians will be resurrected with Him when we all get to those Revelations days, and we will all be happy then, right?

This narrative is consistent with what the church commonly teaches, yet so inconsistent with the nature and character of God. An eventual one-time resurrection leaves so much to go wrong whereas an ongoing process of letting go (death) and letting in (healing, new life, and enfoldment—resurrection) yields to the ability to enjoy more of life’s joy and satisfaction.

Considering Fr. Rohr’s insight, why are we so attracted to the negative? The concept is so common the psychology community has given it a name: “Negativity Bias.” Research on why negative thoughts, feedback, and experiences seem to weigh more (and last longer) than positive ones seems to point to human evolution. Roy F. Baumeister, a professor of social psychology at Florida State University, explored this concept in an article he co-wrote, “Bad Is Stronger Than Good,” featured in *The Review of General Psychology*. He wrote:

Those who are more attuned to bad things would have been more likely to survive threats and, consequently, would have increased the probability of passing along their genes. Survival requires urgent attention to possible bad outcomes but less urgent with regard to good ones.

Our human hard-wiring for survival and our instincts to remember the painful experience to prevent death create a bit of a conundrum for us these days. While we still need to hang on to those instincts to make life-sustaining choices during actual danger, it doesn’t serve us very well in, say, the hallway of our middle school. It also doesn’t help us when it comes to meeting new people who are different from us.

Rohr says, “The neural grooves that you overuse become myelinated, defined, strengthened, and the ones you don’t use, die. If you never go to the neural groove of mercy, by the time you’re my age, you don’t know how to be merciful anymore. That’s how people become ‘set in their ways.’”

When we solidify our beliefs around negativity over the fluidity and movement of God as our center, we lose the agility we need to ‘skip our grooves’, the trenches that have long been dug in our minds from the stimulus of fear. Being stuck in a

mental fixation that affects our decision-making is one way that we “avoid resurrection and choose hell.” It’s perfectly sane to resist resurrection when we are attached to our fear (that may have had a very good reason for existing, and may have even served us to some degree but turned to embitterment over time). One thing that is called for, and grows from breaking free of congealed, patterned belief, is new sight and it is not uncommon that the teacher who will present this lesson to us is the one who we know to be our enemy.

A modern-day example of how this plays out is the Philadelphia-area racial profiling incident that went viral nationwide. A manager acted on her negativity bias and called the police, resulting in an uncalled-for arrest of two African-American men peacefully waiting on a client in Starbucks. Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson accompanied his public apology with Starbucks’ plans to shut down their North American stores and train their 127,000 employees on the harmful effects of negative racial bias.

While some are still skeptical, many folks are praising Starbucks for this decision. There are some who believe this a great step, and others who disagree that a one-day training will change anyone’s mind about racial bias. Many who were just about to put their coffee cups down in protest are adding to the brand’s reputation capital with praise.

Positive action in the face of negativity offers something that can be used to help us look at and hopefully evaluate and challenge any negative patterned belief. Mercy, compassion, and joy becomes another valid option that we can hold on to as we are letting go (letting that part of us die with hope of resurrection). What then, is our part, our work of living out our resurrection?

Rohr asserts that, “Contemplation is necessary. Unless you jump out of that neural groove that you have over-practiced, that’s what you are doing in contemplation, you’re doing yourself a favor, and you’re doing the Universe a favor, when you move to a different response.”

We have to practice becoming contemplative people. Responders vs. reactors. Having time set aside each day to practice contemplation, or for contemplative prayer, trains us to make and take breathing room. Taking a moment to reflect, deeply listen, and approach situations from the core of who we are, with our own mission and values, accompanied by our Creator’s love could lead to new insight that shifts our decision-making. It brings in that agility (new life, resurrection!) into the situation at hand. We, then, begin to restore ourselves to the feelings and

blessings of delight as our new responses deepen our connections to God, ourselves, one another, and raise the value of our experience and that of those around us.

Contemplative Prayer and Practice: The Examen

The Ignatian Examen Prayer is a reflection prayer, led by our memory. Instead of the usual traditional posture of prayer that includes conscience-clearing and supplication, this practice engages our memory of the events of the day to acknowledge the presence of the Divine. There are traditionally five steps to this practice.

The steps below are a version of Ignatius' Examen Prayer.

1. **Invite** the presence of the Divine.
2. **Reflect** on the day with gratitude.
3. **Relish** the moments of connection with the Divine (moments where you felt a sense of aliveness, love, your highest self, joy, etc.)
4. **Ponder** a moment of disconnection with the Divine (moments of frustration, negative energy, exhaustion, your lowest self).
5. **Behold** tomorrow with a new hope. What new hopes does your reflection of the day inspire for tomorrow?

How did you feel after experiencing The Examen Prayer?

What does the presence of the Divine communicate to you about your moments of both connection and disconnection?

How do you imagine a moment of contemplation would affect your choices during moments of disconnection?

The Commission: I bless you to activate many new virtues and cultivate a long life practicing the ever-present love and power that resurrection embodies.