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Contemplative tradition is shaping the emerging church

by Tom Roberts

14th in the series

Albuquerque, N.M. -- Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr is the founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation and Action in Albuquerque, NM. Rohr believes that the contemplative tradition, the third of what he describes as four pillars of the emergent church and his point of entry into the discussion, is precisely the sort of tradition that allows one to see "with a different set of eyes" and perhaps shift the focus a bit.

The great mystics such as Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross, he said, "in their own way are saying that the lowest level of consciousness is 'either-or, us or them.' As you advance, you become more 'us and them,' not 'us or them.' You see things non-dualistically. That's going to be the more important thing that I would like to communicate, that really another word for contemplation is non-dualistic thinking.

"That's what makes people able to be merciful and forgiving. You can't love your enemies with a low-level dualistic mind. It's impossible," Rohr said.

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