

## A Message From the Pastor

### Lent The Way of the Cross

The Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque was founded by Richard Rohr in 1986. In one of his statements of purpose Rohr wrote, "We are trying to stand in a middle place... at the center of the cross, where opposites are held together." That is the journey of Lent. It is the place at the center of the cross where the vertical and the horizontal are held in tension. Too often Lent is viewed as the intensification of spiritual disciplines in order to strengthen our relationship with God. What we fail to remember is that our relationship with God thrusts us back into relationship with others. If the Christian faith ends with personal fulfillment it is selfish and self serving, the antithesis of the way of Jesus. In some circles the notion of personal conversion and a personal relationship with God is foremost. Rohr reminds us that the Christian lifestyle is one of both personal piety and public action.

Rohr writes, "One of the expressions of the radical nature of our work was our extensive inclusivity, bridging gaps within the spiritual and justice communities, building a rhythm of contemplative prayer and Zen meditation into our days, and even more fundamentally, believing that external behavior should be connected to and supported by inner guidance." Most often I find myself focusing on one or the other. I am either active in the community or locked away in the prayer closet. Rarely have I been able to hold the two together. Perhaps that is the great challenge of this Lenten season, to use this as a time of self-reflection, to explore where we need to grow as individuals in order to keep the tension between action and contemplation, the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the faith. That would mean that if you are good at prayer, active with Bible reading, diligent with your devotional life, but rarely consider social action or how your faith intersects your political life, this Lenten season might be a good time to explore the active life and try some new behaviors that you would never have considered in the past. Social action can range from a day at the soup kitchen to volunteering for a favorite political candidate. Or, if you are very involved in the community, up on politics and current events, serving on too many committees or being a do-gooder with your neighbors, perhaps the Lenten journey will need to be one of quiet contemplation, theological reflection and prayer. The challenge is to keep both alive and active as a part of our faith journey.

We have people in our congregation who are good at these things. If you want to explore one or the other Lent could be a time to make new connections over coffee asking how to get involved in prayer or action. Lent could be a time to read a book in an area that we know nothing about. Lent could be a time to do an activity that is brand new like a retreat at a monastery or writing a letter to a legislator. Lent is primarily a time when we embrace growth as a gift. We can begin with some self evaluation and determine an area where we might want to grow as a child of God. Then we find ways to embrace a new dimension of Christian faith, recognizing every opportunity as a gift. My prayer is that each of us will embrace a new challenge, a new dimension of action or contemplation. I will be interested to hear what you have tried, explored, risked and embraced. If you try something new please let me know. I would enjoy hearing your Lenten stories. Have a blessed season.

If you want more information on the Center for Action and Contemplation they have a website. It is [www.cacradicalgrace.org](http://www.cacradicalgrace.org).

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[Return to Table of Contents](#)

[Return to Section 10](#)