

## Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

Thursday, March 30, 2023

Week Thirteen: Powerlessness

### Here in Dust and Dirt

*Writer Anne Lamott chronicles her surprising conversion to Christianity while addicted to drugs and alcohol:*

When I went back to church, I was so hungover that I couldn't stand up for the songs.... The last song was so deep and raw and pure that I could not escape. It was as if the people were singing in between the notes, weeping and joyful at the same time, and I felt like their voices or *something* was rocking me in its bosom, holding me like a scared kid, and I opened up to that feeling—and it washed over me.

I began to cry and left before the benediction, and I raced home and ... walked down the dock past dozens of potted flowers, under a sky as blue as one of God's own dreams, and I opened the door to my houseboat, and I stood there a minute, and then I hung my head and said, "[Forget] it: I quit." I took a long deep breath and said out loud, "All right. You can come in."

So this was my beautiful moment of conversion.

*And here in dust and dirt, O here  
The lilies of his love appear. [1]*

*Lamott reflects on praying from the place of desperation and surrender:*

Prayer ... begins with stopping in our tracks, or with our backs against the wall, or when we are going under the waves, or when we are just so sick and tired of being physically sick and tired that we surrender, or at least we finally stop running away and at long last walk or lurch or crawl toward something. Or maybe, miraculously, we just release our grip slightly.

Prayer is talking to something or anything with which we seek union, even if we are bitter or insane or broken. (In fact, these are probably the best possible conditions under which to pray.) Prayer is taking a chance that against all odds and past history, we

are loved and chosen, and do not have to get it together before we show up. The opposite may be true: We may not be able to get it together until after we show up in such miserable shape....

My belief is that when you're telling the truth, you're close to God. If you say to God, "I am exhausted and depressed beyond words, and I don't like You at all right now, and I recoil from most people who believe in You," that might be the most honest thing you've ever said. If you told me you had said to God, "It is all hopeless, and I don't have a clue if You exist, but I could use a hand," it would almost bring tears to my eyes, tears of pride in you, for the courage it takes to get real—really real. It would make me want to sit next to you at the dinner table.

So prayer is our sometimes real selves trying to communicate with the Real, with Truth, with the Light. [2]

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[1] Anne Lamott, *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 50–51. The closing line is from Henry Vaughan's poem "The Revival."

[2] Anne Lamott, *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012), 5–6, 6–7.

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*Regardless of the conditions we find ourselves in, we learn to navigate in the midst of our lack of control.*