

This year's Lenten Study:

Leading with 'Yes'

The day after the Super Bowl, I was struck by the “analysis” that came from all directions. Unsurprisingly, there were criticisms of certain players, coaches, and officials. But there were also some vicious criticisms of the half-time entertainer. One reporter said that Justin Timberlake’s tribute to Prince was “a grotesque manhandling of a great American artist.” There was criticism of announcers Cris Collinsworth and Al Michaels. There was criticism of Tom Brady’s wife because she tried to comfort her kids over their dad’s loss by saying, “They never won before. We have to share.” And almost every news outlet had its own analysis of “The Super Bowl’s *best* commercials” and “The Super Bowl’s *worst* commercials.”

Why are we so determined to criticize a mother trying to comfort her children? Why are we so interested in rating *commercials* as “best” and “worst?”

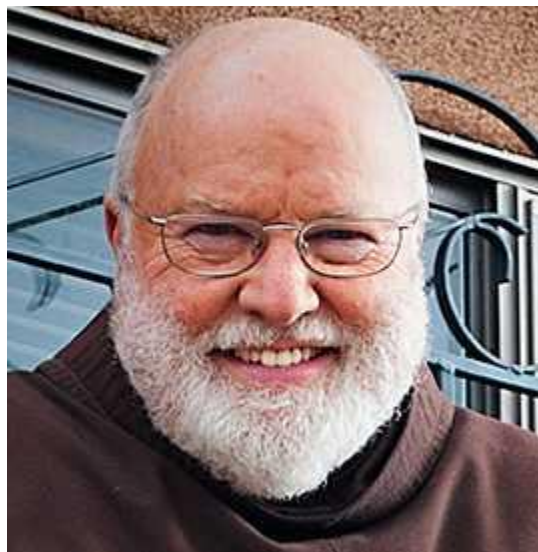
Because we live in a world of constant judging of good or bad, right or wrong, “us” vs. “them.” Our society is deeply polarized. Some older, retired politicians speak wistfully of a time when there was actual bipartisanship in our Congress. No longer.

We who call ourselves “Christians” seem to join in the game of judging with equal fervor as those who are not Christian. And yet in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus clearly said, “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged... Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.” *Matthew 7:1-5*

Given the state of our polarized world, we desperately need a different way to approach life and relationships with our fellow humans on this earth. That’s why I chose the topic of this year’s Lenten Study: “Leading with ‘Yes.’” In his important book, *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*, Fr. Richard Rohr addresses this issue of our polarized world and our tendency to always start from a standpoint of judgment and “No.” Rohr writes, “By teaching ‘Do not judge’..., the great teachers [of almost every religion] are saying that you cannot start seeing or understanding anything if you start with ‘no.’ You have to start with a ‘yes’ of basic acceptance, which means not too quickly labeling, analyzing, or categorizing things as in or out, good or bad, up or down. You have to leave the field open, a field in which God and grace can move. Ego leads with ‘no’ whereas soul leads with ‘yes.’”

During our Friday night studies, we will watch video clips of Fr. Rohr speaking on this highly relevant topic, and we will discuss the disconnect between what Jesus teaches and the way many Christians (like us!) speak and act.

Come join us at 6:45pm Fridays in Lent, in the Parish Hall!



-Mark