A Study Guide for *Immortal Diamonds: The Search for Our True Selves* by Richard Rohr

This six-week study guide is a gift from the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona through the work of the Rev. Dr. Gil Stafford, Canon Theologian. This material is not to be sold in any form. It is solely for the use of individual and group study in conjunction with Richard Rohr’s book, *Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2013). Rohr’s book should be purchased from an approved book dealer.

The small group facilitator should prepare well in advance of the first meeting by becoming very familiar with the study guide and the unique process used to lead the sessions. Each member of the small group should have a copy of *Immortal Diamond* and this study guide. The study guide does not replace reading the book. Therefore, without reading the book, the participants are at a disadvantage.

**Introduction**

Let’s go wisdom walking. We’ll be taking a long journey down the pilgrim’s path. Traipsing through the forest of life. Climbing over the mountains of adversity. Enduring the climate of challenge. During the course of countless miles and numerous days, our walk will build our capacity for inner wisdom—the ability to discern the delicate nuances of our inner life and the world outside us.

I’ve taken numerous wisdom walks. Some were called pilgrimages. I walked Ireland coast-to-coast, alone. I’ve walked the Wicklow Way with several groups. I have also journeyed the wisdom walk of life. I’ve walked with my sister who has Prader-Willi Syndrome. She is physically and mentally handicapped. I’ve walked to death’s doorway with my mom. I failed at being the president of a university. I’ve changed careers in mid-life. Wisdom walks take many forms. We will be using this study guide as a form of Wisdom Walking.

For many years, I thought my mentors were simply wise—I had no idea how they became that way. I assumed because they had lived longer and had more experience they had wisdom. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve been assured by mentors while age and experience does give us the opportunity to become wiser, we will not be any wiser if we avoid the hard work of processing and honestly reflecting on our experiences, both good and bad, successes and failures.

By good fortune, or as Carl Jung would say, through synchronicity, years ago I met Scott Haasarud. He has spent a great portion of his life studying Jung. Scott has shared his ideas and interpretations of Jung through his spiritual direction practice, of which I have been one of his clients for twelve years. I am not a therapist. I am, though, steeped in the ways of Jung through Scott’s influence and my own reading, study, and research. I’ve spent a great deal of time learning from people Robert Bosnack, Edward Edinger, James Hillman, Bill Plotkin, Eligio Stephen Gallegos, and several others whose work has been significantly shaped by Carl Jung. Their work is woven throughout this study guide and my life.

I have focused much of my study of Carl Jung on his work in archetypes and alchemy. Several of his books wrestle with the concepts of the integration of archetypes and alchemy—leading to an understanding of the human process of individuation. Jung was a pilgrim. A world-traveler. Seeking to learn about the universality of archetypes across cultures. While at the same time, he confronted his own unconscious, the anima, the soul. His work on the psyche, archetypes, and
Alchemy has broadened my understanding of what happens to someone’s mind, body, and soul when they go on pilgrimage and encounter the Divine. Through my work then, I have begun to see life itself as a pilgrimage—a wisdom walk.

Wisdom walking is the alchemical four-stage spiral process of pilgrimage. Let me unpack that very loaded sentence. I have equated the four stages of wisdom walking with Jung’s personality typology most commonly found in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. My focus is on what Jung called the interior functions, sensing, intuition, thinking and feeling. I use the functions in a different order as well use of the term “imagination” instead of intuition.

**Step One** is sensing. During a wisdom walk, we use our five senses to gather data about our experience. We see, hear, touch, taste, and smell on the journey. Our mind and body are the first active agents in our interpretation of our experience. During this stage try not to think about what your sensing. Simply let your senses gather data.

In **Step Two**, we engage our thinking. We begin to intellectually process what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. We actively reflect on what we are sensing.

During **Step Three** we acknowledge our feelings about the data our senses have gathered and what our intellect has reflected upon during the experience. What emotions are being evoked on this long walk? My own experience has taught me to expect the unexpected—long forgotten emotions rising to the surface during a wisdom walk. I’ve found myself sadly crying in the middle of long day’s walk for no apparent reason. Only after my emotions surface could I begin to realize that I was dealing with something I had suppressed years ago.

**Step Four** is when the imagination is liberated. I use the word imagination because we all can relate to the idea of imagination. Imagination is the creative juice of every child. And that inner child still lives within us. We just have to set him or her free. During this stage we can begin to imagine a new possibility for our life. We can expand our consciousness. We begin to see our Self, the best part of our conscious life, being influenced by our unconscious, our dreams. We also come to realize that the integration of our conscious and unconscious life can be influenced not only by the consciousness of creation, but our unconscious may be able to hear the still small voice of the Consciousness of Creation, God. In this hearing, we may begin to imagine a new way for us to live, move, and have our being in the Being of the world. The fourth stage is where the psychic gold is being created, the gold of an integrated life. Through integration, we can begin to experience our lives as individuated—Jung’s term for the union of the conscious and the unconscious in a fully developed and mature adult.

Because of the constant application of emotional heat on each step, the alchemists called these four stages, *blackening, whitening, yellowing,* and *reddening*. While the medieval alchemists were the forefathers of modern chemistry, Jung believed they were also experiencing a psychic pilgrimage—a journey into the unconscious collective archetypes. Alchemy, pilgrimage, and wisdom walking, are not linear processes—they operate in spiral. Each time you go through the four-stage process you can gain new insights and more experience, which in turn, build a larger capacity for processing your next pilgrimage of wisdom walking.
Specific Use of this Study Guide

This study guide is intended for use in book and bible studies provided by the author. A trained small group facilitator will lead each session. The study will take the individual and/or the group through the four steps of Wisdom Walking each week of the study. Each session will follow the same format. 1) An opening prayer. 2) Group check-in. 3) A brief introduction of the Bible materials or the book being studied. 4) A guided tour through the four steps of Wisdom Walking. 5) Using Eric Law’s mutual invitation (described below), the facilitator will lead the group in sharing what each person gleaned in the study. 6) The facilitator guides the group through a discussion of the reflection questions. 6) A closing prayer. It is important that the facilitator and the group follow the model.

Mutual Invitation

Episcopal priest Eric Law developed Mutual Invitation in his groundbreaking book *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb* (Chalice Press, 1993). Law’s work was originally created as a way of providing a safe environment for full participation within multi-cultural groups. He envisioned Mutual invitation as a means of ensuring that each member of the group would be invited to speak. In some cultures (and among some introverts) they will not speak unless invited to do so. Some minority groups and some introverts will often sit quietly and let the dominant culture and the extroverts control the conversation. Law also created this process to open a space for individuals to have the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings without fear of being “told” what is best or how to feel or think.

There are two parts to the process. First, the facilitator models the process. He or she asks the first question and then answers it within an appropriate time frame, usually less then two minutes. Then the facilitator invites someone else to answer the question. (Going around the circle encourages people to stop listening and think only of their own answer to the question. Not knowing when you will be asked to speak encourages you to listen.) The person that has been invited may respond to the question. Pass. Or pass for now meaning they have an opportunity to answer the question at another time.

Second, no one may comment about what someone else has said. The speaker must refer only to his or her own answer. This protects each person in the group from the fear of being put down, or that his or her answer may not be correct. The point of the process is for people to learn holy listening, of each other, and of the Spirit. The method is simple and effective. However, I have found that groups have a very difficult time following the guidelines. The facilitator must prepare the group for the procedure and remind them each week of their agreement to follow the mutual invitation process.
Session One—Invitation, Preface, and Chapter 1, “What is The True Self”  
(Before and after the prayer allow one minute for silence.)

Opening Prayer: O Holy One, of all that was, and is, and will be; today we seek your guidance as we study the Holy Scripture. May we be willing and open to read, learn, mark, and inwardly digest the text. We pray that we may practice holy listening by being willing to listen with open hearts to those in our group and to the Spirit. Bless our time together. We pray in the Name of the Holy undivided Trinity. Amen.

Group check in: The facilitator will ask each person in the group if they would like to share one thing that is going in their life this week. Each person should keep their comments to two minutes to ensure everyone has time to share and to respect the time constraints of the small group session.

Background for Session One

In this Invitation, Preface, and Chapter 1, Rohr establishes his method of engaging Scripture, Tradition, and inner experience as the foundational structure of moving from the False Self towards the True Self (page xxii). He writes that the Christ figure is the archetype of the True Self, the union of matter and spirit, the container of the unity of the divine and human experience (xiii). In order to follow Christ’s model and develop our own True Self, Rohr says we must return to a “practice-based spirituality,” where the vantage point switches from looking at God to looking out from God.” He urges us to consider that our lives as Christians are “more about living and doing than thinking.” (xxiv)

Rohr relies on Thomas Merton’s image of the False Self and the True Self. The False Self, he says, is the small self, the ego. “I alone will be my reference point.” (2) Obviously, there is a need for a healthy ego. However, we when retreat into individualism and egocentric behavior we isolate ourselves from the possibility of being in relationship with our True Self, the full reality of consciousness. In other words, if we only see the world through our eyes and not the eyes of God and others we will never live into our True Self. (2-4)

The True Self, Rohr says, is the soul—the oneness we experience in the moment of experiencing God totally within us, while simultaneously, beyond us. (5) Christ in you is the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

Rohr outlines the possibility of our realization of the True Self as found in his comments in Chapter 1.

- Rohr stresses the importance of understanding the work of the two halves of our life. In the first half we establish the “container,” the structure and rules we use to function safely in life. Then in the second half we receive the “contents,” that which we need to wrestle with the Big Questions of life—the soul, life, death, the Divine. Discovering the True Self is the work of the second half of life (9, and footnote on page 216).
- The discovery of our True Self is found in our discovery of God. (12-14) Rohr references Ken Wilbur, Integral Theory, and spiral dynamics (footnote page 217) to help us
understand our movement from the first half to the second of life—the process of our spiritual maturation.

- Our soul is our psyche. Rohr uses the image of a butterfly to describe our soul. “It alights, tastes, and moves forward…your soul is who you are in God and who God is in you.” (15-16)

- The DNA of the Creator is in all of creation. When we engage and embrace the “thisness” of every being and moment of creation, we move closer to the mystery of the revelation of God (17-18).

- When both God and the True Self fully reveal themselves in freedom, then the major work is in full process. (19)

- “Soulful people, invariably humble and honest about themselves, are also risk takers: they both know the rules and how to break the rules properly.” (20)

- Rohr says we do not have to create our True Self, earn it, or work up to it; we simply have to access the very breath of God. (25)

Reading for Session One (from page 23)

“There is something in you that is not touched by coming and going, by up and down, by for or against, by the raucous teams of totally right or totally wrong. There is a part of you that is patient with both goodness and evil to gradually show themselves, exactly as God does. There is a part of you that does not rush to judgment. Rather, it stands vigilant and patient in the tragic gap that almost every moment offers. It is a riverbed of mercy. It is vast, silent, restful, and resourceful, and it receives, and also lets go of all the comings and goings. It is awareness itself (as opposed to judgment itself), an awareness is not as such “thinking.” It refuses to be pulled into the emotional and mental tugs of war that most of life is—before it is forever over and gone. To look out from this untouchable silence is what we mean by contemplation. In her Interior Castle, St. Teresa of Avila says, “The soul is spacious, plentiful, and its amplitude is impossible to exaggerate…the sun here radiates to every part…and nothing can diminish its beauty.” This is your soul. It is God-in-you. This is your True Self. And you know what? Your soul is much larger than you.”
Reflect on the reading

Individually process through the four stages using the space provided below for your response.

Sensing: What are you Sensing; hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, seeing in the reading?

Thinking: What are you Thinking about what you sensed in the reading?

Feeling: What Feelings emerge as you walk through this reading?

Imagination: In this fourth stage it’s time to let go of any preconceived notions. During this stage we let our Imagination take control. What in the text has opened your Imagination about the possibility of a new future in your life? Maybe you need to draw a picture, write a poem or song in order to express your imagination?
1) The facilitator will guide the group through a discussion of the four steps using Mutual Invitation.

2) The facilitator will then lead an open discussion:

What insights did you gain from listening to others in the group?

Was there a passage you strongly agreed with or strongly disagreed with (even one not mentioned in the background materials)?

Was there an insight from the reading that you plan on taking away from tonight’s study?

The final question to ponder, “I wonder how my relationship with the divine has been enriched through today’s study?”

3) The facilitator will make the assignment for the next session.

Closing prayer:

O Holy One, Divine of all that was, is, and ever will be, we ask you to pour your grace of love on us. Grant us the strength to follow in the path of love taught by Saint John the Divine. Encourage us each day to abide in your love, for which we are eternally grateful. Hear our prayers. Know our hearts. Guide us safely home. We pray in the name of God’s Son, the symbol of God’s love in our midst.
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Session Two—Chapter 2, “What is the False Self?”
(Before and after the prayer allow one minute for silence.)

**Opening Prayer:** O Holy One, of all that was, and is, and will be; today we seek your guidance as we study the Holy Scripture. May we be willing and open to read, learn, mark, and inwardly digest the text. We pray that we may practice holy listening by being willing to listen with open hearts to those in our group and to the Spirit. Bless our time together. We pray in the Name of the Holy undivided Trinity. Amen.

**Group check in:** The facilitator will ask each person in the group if they would like to share one thing that is going in their life this week. Each person should keep their comments to two minutes to ensure everyone has time to share and to respect the time constraints of the small group session.

**Background for Session Two**

Our False Self, as defined by Rohr, is our small self, what we call the ego. We need a healthy ego in the first half of life: a healthy body image, vocation, sexual identity, etc. The attachment to these self-images, however, can leave us trapped in the first half of life, without moving into the identity with our True Self. Rohr says our attachment, or addiction to our False Self creates four major splits in our identity. (29)

1. We split from our shadow self and pretend to be our idealized self.
2. We split our mind from our body and soul and live in our minds.
3. We split life from death and try to live our life without acknowledging death exists.
4. We split ourselves from other selves and try to live apart, superior, and separate.

True spiritual teachers, like Jesus, change lives (35). But the ego wants to control its environment and “hates change.” So, we struggle being followers of our spiritual teachers. (36) Spiritual teachers, like Jesus, Buddha, St. Francis, and Rumi talk a great deal about the art of dying, the letting go of the False Self. (37) Unfortunately, too many of us have been taught that dying to self involves mistreating our selves and our bodies. But through the Christian theology of Incarnation, we believe that God came in human form. God’s presence among us, Jesus Christ, liberates us to understand that our bodies are the containers of God’s divine DNA. Therefore, it’s not the body we have to die to, but instead, the False Self, the false image of our body. (39) As well, in more traditional forms of Christianity we have been taught that to die to self involves mistreating our selves and our bodies. But through the Christian theology of Incarnation, we believe that God came in human form. God’s presence among us, Jesus Christ, liberates us to understand that our bodies are the containers of God’s divine DNA. Therefore, it’s not the body we have to die to, but instead, the False Self, the false image of our body. (39) As well, in more traditional forms of Christianity we have been taught that to die to self, means that we have to make self-sacrifices, which often means punishing the body. Unfortunately, self-sacrifice often feeds the ego, the False Self, with a sense of entitlement; I have made sacrifices therefore I am right, more holy, a better person. (39) Rohr says, though, that sacrifice and asceticism have too much ego payoff and are indicators of “False self-religion.” (41) Rohr quotes Rene Girard in saying that Jesus came to end sacrificial religion. (41) Jesus, instead, leaves us with is a mystical spirituality that never knows “with absolute surety that it is right or good, but in fact it does not even need to, which is what we mean by faith.” (47) Letting go, dying to the False Self, the imagined loss of our individuality, bears fruit, expands our life, our soul. (John 12:24) (49) Rohr says, “It is very important that you know that the True Self is not moral perfection or even psychological wholeness,” but a place where we will know who we are in
God. (51-52) For those who find God and the True Self they will discover that the Self does not really go to heaven, but already exists there. (54) We find a life of wholeness on earth.

Reading for Session Two (56-57)

“The Song of the True Self”

Within us there is an inner, natural dignity. (You often see it in older folks.)
An inherent worthiness that already knows and enjoys. (You see it in children.)
It is an immortal diamond waiting to be mined and is never discovered undesired.
It is a reverence humming within you that must be honored.
Call it the soul, the unconscious, deep consciousness, or the indwelling Holy Spirit.
Call it nothing.
It does not need the right name or right religion to show itself.
It does not even need to be understood. It is usually wordless.
It just is, and shows itself best when we are silent, or in love, or both.
It is God-in-All-Things yet not circumscribed by any one thing.
It is enjoyed only when each part is in union with all other parts, because only then does it stand in the full truth.
Once in a while, this True Self becomes radiant and highly visible in one lovely place or Person.
Superbly so, and for all to see, in the body of the Risen Christ.
And note that I did say “body.” It begins here and now in our embodied state in this world. This, the Christ Mystery travels the roads of time.
Once you have encountered this True Self—and once is more than enough—the False Self will begin to fall away on its own.
This will take most of your life, however, just as it did Jesus.
Reflect on the reading

Individually process through the four stages using the space provided below for your response.

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**Feeling:** What Feelings emerge as you walk through this reading?

**Imagination:** In this fourth stage it’s time to let go of any preconceived notions. During this stage we let our Imagination take control. What in the text has opened your Imagination about the possibility of a new future in your life? Maybe you need to draw a picture, write a poem or song in order to express your imagination?
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Closing prayer:

O Holy One, Divine of all that was, is, and ever will be, we ask you to pour your grace of love on us. Grant us the strength to follow in the path of love taught by Saint John the Divine. Encourage us each day to abide in your love, for which we are eternally grateful. Hear our prayers. Know our hearts. Guide us safely home. We pray in the name of God’s Son, the symbol of God’s love in our midst.

(Before and after the prayer allow one minute for silence.)

Opening Prayer: O Holy One, of all that was, and is, and will be; today we seek your guidance as we study the Holy Scripture. May we be willing and open to read, learn, mark, and inwardly digest the text. We pray that we may practice holy listening by being willing to listen with open hearts to those in our group and to the Spirit. Bless our time together. We pray in the Name of the Holy undivided Trinity. Amen.

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Background for Session 3

In this session, Chapters 3 and 4, Rohr talks about the symbols of death and resurrection in our daily life.

First, in Chapter 3 he writes about the multiple mini-deaths we must experience in order to move beyond our False Self. “Some form of death—psychological, spiritual, relational, or physical—is the only way we will loosen our tie to our small and separate False Self. Only then does return in a new shape, which I am calling the Risen Christ, or the soul, or the True Self.” (62) But what has to die is not necessarily bad. (63) In order to truly love, Rohr says, we must chose to die, to let go, to give our self away to someone or something else—we enter into a “trust walk.” (65)

Second, in Chapter 4, Rohr teaches us about the powerful language of metaphor. Within our sacred stories, symbols, metaphors we find the honesty of true mystery. (68) Symbols, Rohr writes, “allow us to reframe, reorganize, and reset the core meanings of our lives again and again.” (73) “Without new symbols, which are sometimes words, unconscious meanings never break through to consciousness, and the invisible has no way of becoming visible.” (72) “Symbols bring things from the hidden unconscious to consciousness, where they can be operative.” (75)

However, in our enlightened world we rely on rational and provable identities and confuse them the real. Religion itself has tried to be rational and provable in its beliefs. Through the desire of a rational religion, however, religious people lost their connection with the alternative consciousness of faith. “We lost access to the higher levels of consciousness, the transrational, the transpersonal, the transcendent itself. Most tragic, we lost most inner experience of our own outer belief system.” (75) In the search of the True Self, we need symbols and metaphors as our map to higher consciousness. Carl Jung wrote that, “What happens in the life of Christ happens always and everywhere,” making Christ “the Archetype of the Self.” (79) Resurrection, then, is in every part of the world and our life and it is the moment of realization that shines light all of our understanding of our Self. (80-84) This realization, though, comes in the simultaneous
moment of woundedness and resurrection. By his wounds, and by ours, we are healed. “Our wounds are our glory,” says Lady Julian Norwich. (85) This kind of enveloping of all woundedness into resurrection is found in our understanding of Incarnation. God became human. Resurrection is more about the here and now of goodness, love, and healing than about eternal significance. “The great unfolding of God’s Mystery “enfolds” all the previous stages, and nothing is wasted or discarded—not even evil, death, or sin (this is precisely why the Bible includes those disappointing stories of murder, rape, and war)…God is without doubt a great risk taker…(who) is clearly into freedom, imagination, and creativity.” (89) God’s risk is borne out in beauty and quirkiness of the Creator’s sacred creation, a place where we can live in hope and love. (90) We can fully experience God, creation, and our True Self by being fully present to God, creation, and our Self. “How you know anything is how you know everything.” (93) “Self-knowledge and God knowledge will be experienced in the same knowing…Your experience of your deepest and truest self and your deepest experience of God will prove one another right—and prove one another good.” (93)

Reading for Session 3 (90-91)

The first principle of great spiritual teachers is rather constant here: only love can be entrusted with the Big Truth. All other attitudes will murder and mangle truthfulness. Humans must first find the unified field of love and then start thinking from that point. All prayer disciplines are somehow trying to get head and heart and body to work as one, and that changes thinking entirely. “The concentration of attention in the heart—this is the starting point of prayer,” says St. Theophane the Recluse, the nineteenth Russian mystic. Any other “handler” of your experience, including the rational mind or even mere intellectual theology eventually distorts and destroys the beauty and healing power of Big Truth. One of favorite fathers of the church, Evagrius Ponticus (345-399), said that you could not be a theologian unless you knew how to pray, and only people who prayed could be theologians. This is surely true.

Perhaps the second principle is that truth is on the same level always beautiful—and healing—to those who honestly want truth. Big Truth cannot be angry, antagonistic, or forced on anyone, or it will inherently distort the message. John Duns Scotus, in good Franciscan style, taught that the primary moral category was beauty itself, or what he called “the harmony of goodness.” The good, the united, and the true in this world will always be somehow beautiful too, and beautiful souls will recognize it immediately.
Reflect on the reading

Individually process through the four stages using the space provided below for your response.

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Session 4 — Chapter 5 Thou Art That &
Chapter 6 If It Is True, It Is True Everywhere

(Before and after the prayer allow one minute for silence.)

Opening Prayer: O Holy One, of all that was, and is, and will be; today we seek your guidance as we study the Holy Scripture. May we be willing and open to read, learn, mark, and inwardly digest the text. We pray that we may practice holy listening by being willing to listen with open hearts to those in our group and to the Spirit. Bless our time together. We pray in the Name of the Holy undivided Trinity. Amen.

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Background for Session 4

Jesus is the teacher of an alternative wisdom, one that has been lost over the generations of religious teaching. (102) This alternative wisdom, Rohr says, is union with the divine and the universal, which should be the goal and point of religion. (95) As Christians, we find that union with God through Jesus Christ. “Jesus does not equal God per se, which is for us the Trinity. Jesus, much better and more correctly, is the union between God and the human…Once we made Jesus only divine, we ended up being only human, and the whole process of human transformation ground to a halt. That is the way the dualistic mind works.” (97)

Rohr says that, “God is more a verb than a noun,” meaning God is love, the essence of true relationship. (98) Being in union with God is being in relationship with pure love itself. To be in union with God, and with love itself, is to be in union with our True Self. “The True Self, in its original, pure, primordial state, is wholly or partially identifiable or even identical with God, the Ultimate Reality that is ground and origin of all phenomena…Longing for God and longing for our True Self are the same longing. (99) Meister Eckhart wrote, “The eye through which I see God is the same eye through God sees me; my eye and God’s eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love.” (106)

The ancient peoples connected with the divine through myth, poetry, dance, music, fertility, and nature. (112) More recently, contemplatives and mystics experienced a similar intimate relationship, union, with the divine by processing the moment in non-duality. (113-115) Non-dual thinking and understanding of reality and spirituality brings a state of unification—inclusive thinking. Judeo-Christian thinking has resided in dual thinking, causing division and splits in our thinking and practice. (117-118) Our goal, however, as Jesus taught us, is unity with the divine. A unity that makes children of God, heirs of God’s kingdom; we have been given everything we need to share in the divine nature itself. (2 Peter 1:3-4) St. Irenaeus, “God passed into man so that man might pass over to God.” (119) John the Divine (writer of the Gospel of John) considers actual ontological (God exists and is therefore real) and metaphysical (the discovery of what God
is reality like) union with God as our full participation in the Trinity, “sharing in the divine nature.” (119-120) Unfortunately, “Our True Self remains untouched for most of us, because any direct experience of God or explicit union with God was blocked, denied, and largely declared impossible. It always had to be mediated by a Bible, priest, minister, church, or sacrament, and very often the mediators, and the defending of their mediations, became the primary message itself.” But, we are being called to be a remnant spirit who clings to the core message and looks to the ancients and Jesus as our model towards the True Self. (Isaiah 4:3) (125)

Rohr writes, “Perhaps God and consciousness and Being are the same thing.” (129) Union with God is possible through all of God’s creation. St. Bonaventure and St. Paul both wrote that God is in all things, all in all (I Corinthians 15:28). All of God is in all of creation. People are even worshipping God when they don’t know God. God is not “far from any of us, since it is in God that we live, and move, and have our being.” (Acts 17:27-28) Natural law, or natural theology, teaches that the soul or the True Self responds naturally to the soul of other things. (136) Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote that this is a “divine allurement.” We are being fetched by God to be in union with the divine, creation, one another, and our True Self. (134) The integration of all that we are, with all that God is—we find in union with God and God’s love.

**Reading for Session 4 (135-137)**

Do you want the Gospel to be small truth or Great Truth? This is the question Christians must ask themselves.

Science is no longer our enemy; instead quantum physics, biology, and other academic disciplines are revealing science as probably our new and best partner, much better than philosophy ever was. If something is spiritually true, it will also be true in the physical world, all religions will somehow be looking at that “one truth” from different angles, goals, assumptions, and vocabulary, as will all the disciplines of any great university. If we are really convinced that we have the Great Big Truth, then we should also be able to trust that others will see it from their different angles—or it is not a great big truth. No one wants to be our enemy unless they assume that we ourselves have chosen to live in our own small tent and cannot talk to them or do not want to talk to them on their terms. We are the one who have too often assumed ill will and have been far too eager to create enemies instead of realizing that other often enjoy very similar “good news” but inside different packaging.

I do not believe the will of God is a theory, an argued moral theology, or an abstraction in any form; it is seeking the truth of each situation in that situation as best as we can figure it out. What else could God ask of humanity, most of whom had no access to synagogue, temple, church, Koran, moral theology class, or Bible? Were they all utterly lost and rejected? Somehow the True Self in all humans has a natural access to that “hidden will of God—if the mind and heart and soul are open and undefended (which is always the spiritual task and not easily achieved.)
Reflect on the reading

Individually process through the four stages using the space provided below for your response.

**Sensing:** What are you Sensing; hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, seeing in the reading?

**Thinking:** What are you Thinking about what you sensed in the reading?

**Feeling:** What Feelings emerge as you walk through this reading?

**Imagination:** In this fourth stage it’s time to let go of any preconceived notions. During this stage we let our Imagination take control. What in the text has opened your Imagination about the possibility of a new future in your life? Maybe you need to draw a picture, write a poem or song in order to express your imagination?
1) The facilitator will guide the group through a discussion of the four steps using Mutual Invitation.

2) The facilitator will then lead an open discussion:

What insights did you gain from listening to others in the group?

Was there a passage you strongly agreed with or strongly disagreed with (even one not mentioned in the background materials)?

Was there an insight from the reading that you plan on taking away from tonight’s study?

The final question to ponder, “I wonder how my relationship with the divine has been enriched through today’s study?”

3) The facilitator will make the assignment for the next session.

Closing prayer:

O Holy One, Divine of all that was, is, and ever will be, we ask you to pour your grace of love on us. Grant us the strength to follow in the path of love taught by Saint John the Divine. Encourage us each day to abide in your love, for which we are eternally grateful. Hear our prayers. Know our hearts. Guide us safely home. We pray in the name of God’s Son, the symbol of God’s love in our midst.
Session 5—Chapter 7 Enlightenment at Gunpoint

(Before and after the prayer allow one minute for silence.)

Opening Prayer: O Holy One, of all that was, and is, and will be; today we seek your guidance as we study the Holy Scripture. May we be willing and open to read, learn, mark, and inwardly digest the text. We pray that we may practice holy listening by being willing to listen with open hearts to those in our group and to the Spirit. Bless our time together. We pray in the Name of the Holy undivided Trinity. Amen.

Group check in: The facilitator will ask each person in the group if they would like to share one thing that is going in their life this week. Each person should keep their comments to two minutes to ensure everyone has time to share and to respect the time constraints of the small group session.

Background for Session 5

Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid, trust in God and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house.” (John 14:1-2) Rohr writes that Jesus is telling us that everyone has universal access to God. Jesus goes on to say that salvation is not a matter of if, but when, and “maybe how much can you handle.” (141) Therefore, there is no reason to be afraid of death. The fear of physical death, or any manifestation of ego death, including avoidance and denial, feeds our False Self—the True Self is not afraid of death. (143) Be present to death and learn from death. By accompanying others in their death and suffering creates a “corporal work of mercy” in the community and us as individuals. In other words, those who are companions of the dying gain an unexpected wisdom, what Rohr calls “reverse theology.” We are there to support the dying, but the table is reversed and we learn from them. (145)

As Jesus did, each human must go through their own many experiences of dying. By facing the unknown of these experiences we gain knowledge, discover our True Self, and will be better able to walk through our eventual physical death. We forget to acknowledge this was true for Jesus as well. Rohr says, “I do not believe the human mind of Jesus fully knew his own True Self as the “Son of God” until after the resurrection. (147) Jesus’s life is a model for how we live and process our own life experience. Christ’s crucifixion is the union of God’s experience with the human experience and the fulfillment of Jesus’s exploration for his own True Self. God knows our pain, suffering, and death in and through the experience of being one with Jesus. “The Crucified One is God’s standing solidarity with the suffering, the tragedy, and the disaster of all time, and God’s promise that it will not have the final word.” Love wins, not death. (148)

The act of redemption, Rohr says, already took place in God’s unconditional choice of Incarnation. “Incarnation was already redemption. Jesus did not come to change the mind of God about humanity but to change the mind of humanity about God.” (150) Jesus’s death was not the result of the need for at-one-ment (God’s need for a blood sacrifice of his son). Jesus’s death was, instead, to reveal “to us our own human problem: that we fear, and we kill what we should love.” Letting go of our fear is our resurrection, which is a path with a “thousand gates” through which we are led past our own fear of death. As did Jesus, we must die before we die “and then you
will know how to die and not be afraid of it.” (150-151) Rohr says that “our fear of death is actually our fear of God. If we resolve one, we normally resolve the other.” (155)

**Reading for Session 5 (156-157)**

God is a verb more than a noun…God is a process rather than a clear name or idea, a communion, Interbeing itself, and never an isolated deity that can be capture by our mind.

Christians believe that God is formlessness (the Father), God is form (the Son), and God is the very love energy between those two (the Holy Spirit). The three do not cancel one another out; rather, they do exactly the opposite. God is relationship itself and known in relationship, which opens up a huge conversation with the world of science and physics and therapy too. What a wonderful surprise this is, yet it names everything correctly at the core—from atoms, to ecosystems, to families, to galaxies. The doctrine of the Trinity was made to order to defeat the dualistic mind and invite us into nondual, holistic consciousness. It replaced the argumentative principle of two with the dynamic principle of three. It leaves us inside the wonderfully open space of “not one, but not two either”…God is a circle dance of total outpouring and perfect receiving among three intimate partners, who receive their Total Self from another and then hand it on to another, who repeats the self-emptying act of love to a third…God only and always loves.
Reflect on the reading

Individually process through the four stages using the space provided below for your response.

Sensing: What are you Sensing; hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, seeing in the reading?

Thinking: What are you Thinking about what you sensed in the reading?

Feeling: What Feelings emerge as you walk through this reading?

Imagination: In this fourth stage it’s time to let go of any preconceived notions. During this stage we let our Imagination take control. What in the text has opened your Imagination about the possibility of a new future in your life? Maybe you need to draw a picture, write a poem or song in order to express your imagination?
1) The facilitator will guide the group through a discussion of the four steps using Mutual Invitation.

2) The facilitator will then lead an open discussion:

What insights did you gain from listening to others in the group?

Was there a passage you strongly agreed with or strongly disagreed with (even one not mentioned in the background materials)?

Was there an insight from the reading that you plan on taking away from tonight’s study?

The final question to ponder, “I wonder how my relationship with the divine has been enriched through today’s study?”

3) The facilitator will make the assignment for the next session.

Closing prayer:

O Holy One, Divine of all that was, is, and ever will be, we ask you to pour your grace of love on us. Grant us the strength to follow in the path of love taught by Saint John the Divine. Encourage us each day to abide in your love, for which we are eternally grateful. Hear our prayers. Know our hearts. Guide us safely home. We pray in the name of God’s Son, the symbol of God’s love in our midst.
Session 6—Chapter 8 Intimate with Everything & Chapter 9 Love is Stronger Than Death

(Before and after the prayer allow one minute for silence.)

Opening Prayer: O Holy One, of all that was, and is, and will be; today we seek your guidance as we study the Holy Scripture. May we be willing and open to read, learn, mark, and inwardly digest the text. We pray that we may practice holy listening by being willing to listen with open hearts to those in our group and to the Spirit. Bless our time together. We pray in the Name of the Holy undivided Trinity. Amen.

Group check in: The facilitator will ask each person in the group if they would like to share one thing that is going in their life this week. Each person should keep their comments to two minutes to ensure everyone has time to share and to respect the time constraints of the small group session.

Background for Session 6

The secret is this, “an infinite God seeks and desires intimacy with the human soul.” (164) Human intimacy and vulnerability is necessary to enter into a relationship with the Divine who has sought an intimate, vulnerable, and humble relationship through the Incarnation of Jesus. “The risen Christ starts off by revealing the human wounds of God, God’s total solidarity with human suffering,” in the crucifixion. (167) In order to discover the True Self we must be vulnerable and reveal our inner life to our self, the other, and the divine as Jesus did. (168) God could only expect us to become what God has already experienced through Jesus. (171) This intimacy and vulnerability of the True Self is the only gateway into the relationship of the union of human and divine love. (172-173) “Love is who you are and who are still becoming.” (176)

Because, “Love is stronger than death.” (Song of Songs 8:6) Rohr says, then, that our mistakes, failures, and radical insufficiency are what lead us into divine union—a larger life, a larger love—the paradox of human/divine love. (180) “The True Self does what is really loves and therefore loves what it does.” (182) Because of this love union, the Risen Christ is the universal YES to everything, including our failures, and is therefore the source of our metamorphosis, our resurrection of the False Self into the True Self. (183) The True Self is the expression of the economy of God’s grace. In the True Self there is no longer anything to hate, reject, deny, or judge as unworthy or unnecessary. (184) The True Self cannot find or know God without bringing everything and everybody along for this same relationship of love. “You did not find the Great Love except by finding yourself too, and you cannot find your True Self without falling into the Great Love.” (185) We do not have to wait for the divine love of eternity to encompass our life. We can experience this love in our discovery of our True Self, the divine/human union, a life transformed into the immortal diamond.
Diamonds are deeply hidden under miles, pounds, and pressure of earth and time, but like the True Self, like the thread, like the presence itself, they are there. And now YOU are there too.

My dear people,
We are already the children of God.
But what we are in the future is not fully revealed.
All we know, is that when it is revealed,
We shall all be like him (I John 3:2)

Many Christians begin Lent on Ash Wednesday with the signing of ashes on their forehead and the words from Genesis 3:19, which is just the first shocking part of the message.

Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return.

But then we should be anointed (“Christed”) with a holy oil on Easter morning with the other half of the message.

Love is always stronger than death, and unto that love you have now returned.

I order you, O sleeper, to awake!
I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell.
Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead.
Rise up, work of my hands, you were created in my image.
Rise, let up leave this place, for you are in me and I am in you.
Together we form only one person and we cannot be separated!

(From an ancient homily on Holy Saturday, Easter Eve)
Reflect on the reading

Individually process through the four stages using the space provided below for your response.

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**Thinking:** What are you Thinking about what you sensed in the reading?

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**Feeling:** What Feelings emerge as you walk through this reading?

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3) The facilitator will make the assignment for the next session.

**Closing prayer:**

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