**ALL THINGS NEW**

**Richard Rohr**

Yearning for a new way will not produce it. Only ending the old way can do that.  
You cannot hold onto the old, all the while declaring that you want something new.  
The old will defy the new;  
The old will deny the new;  
The old will decry the new.  
There is only one way to bring in the new. You must make room for it.—Neale Donald Walsch [1]

My spiritual father, Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), was a master of making room for the new and letting go of that which was tired or empty. He was ready for absolute newness from God and therefore could also trust fresh and new attitudes in himself. His God was not tired, and so he was never tired. His God was not old, so Francis remained forever young.

Francis was the first to create a living Nativity scene, bringing to life the revolutionary new way that God revealed God’s self in the vulnerability of a baby in a manger. The Incarnation of God in Jesus was foundational to Francis, and he wanted others to experience its life-changing power.

Francis was at once very traditional and entirely new in the ways of holiness. Franciscanism is not an iconoclastic dismissal of traditional Christian images, history, or culture, but a positive choosing of the deep, shining, and enduring divine images that are hidden beneath the too-easy formulas. It is no fast-food religion, but slow and healthy nutrition.

Both Jesus and Francis did not let the old get in the way of the new, but like all religious geniuses, revealed what the old was saying all along. Francis both named and exemplified that “first, churchless incarnation in the human heart.” [2] But somehow, he also knew that it was the half-knowing, organized Church that passed this shared mystery on to him and preserved it for future generations. He had the humility and patience to know that whatever is true is always a shared truth; and only institutions, for all their weaknesses, make this widely shareable, historical, and communal.

Both Jesus and Francis were “conservatives” in the true sense of the term: they conserved what was worth conserving—the core, the transformative life of the Gospel—and did not let accidentals get in the way. They then ended up looking quite “progressive,” radical, and even dangerous to the status quo. This is the biblical pattern, from Abraham to Moses, to Jeremiah, Job, John the Baptist, Mary, and Joseph.

**Gateway to Silence:**You make all things new.

**References:**  
[1] Neale Donald Walsch, Facebook post, July 22, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/NealeDonaldWalsch/photos/a.400017592343.181782.40638047343/10152199231662344/?type=3&theater>.  
[2] Christian Wiman, My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux: 2013), 92.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, [Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi](http://store.cac.org/Eager-to-Love-The-Alternative-Way-of-Francis-of-Assisi_p_348.html) (Franciscan Media: 2014), xiii-xiv, xvii, xix-xxi.

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