

CENTRE OF ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION :
Spiritual Direction (Fr Richard Rohr (OFM))

Who Do You Say That I Am?
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

We all have a yearning to be known by each other and by God. Professor and spiritual director Ruth Takiko West uses Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" as a model for our deepest spiritual questioning.

"Who do you say that I am?" is a central question of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, as he helps the disciples clarify their relationship to and with him. It is also a crucial question for Jesus in his own identity clarification. We note the progression of questions: who do people say that I am, who do you say that I am, and, in Matthew's Gospel, who do people say the Son of man is? Each of these questions goes to the heart of every Christian's, or dare I say every person's, longing for a connection to the Divine, to their deepest self, and to the world they live in. . . . [1]

There is an inherently cyclical interrelationship between yearning for the presence of Spirit and learning what and who we are in the presence of Spirit. In the Christian tradition, Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" He is emphasizing that despite what the crowd might be saying about him, it is imperative that they know who he is. It is equally important that we know who Jesus, God, or the Spirit is for us. Our personal beliefs lead us to yearn to know more about our unique relationship to the Divine. This awareness becomes the foundation upon which our spirituality is built.

Our questions about who God is lead us to simultaneously ponder our own significance to Spirit. Because Jesus taught by modelling, we follow his example and ask God, "Who do you say that I am?" Because we are the *imago Dei* (image of God), I believe God would say that we are God's Beloved, fearfully and wonderfully made. It is important to consider what we might know about ourselves and how we interact or respond in the ways we do, or what we perceive or believe about our own faith, theology, and identity. As we endeavour to live fully into this notion of belovedness, we must be introspective and self-aware, carefully uncovering and discovering our most authentic selves while staying connected to Spirit, utilizing the resources of prayer and other spiritual practices. This is the basis of how we live out our spirituality.

As we look in the mirror and at each other and Creation, once more we ask ourselves, "Who do you say that I am?" How might we represent the Holy in the world? How do we interact with each other and Creation? . . . We must be mindful to revere the Holy in our neighbours—to share our stories about God's goodness and grace, companionship and love in the hopes of becoming the community that God has intended.