

God Surrenders to Us in Love

Dr. Ilia Delio and Richard Rohr

Dr. Ilia Delio is a theologian and teacher who sees the Incarnation as God surrendering to us in humble, human form. She writes:

Surrender to God expresses one's belief that God is love and love never fails. We would be remiss to think, however, that surrender is a movement in trust and love only on our part, as if God might be waiting for us to hand over the reins of control. Such an idea misses out on the tremendous mystery of God as love, for our surrender to God is based on God's surrender to us...

The surrender of God in the person of Jesus Christ is the great mystery of God. God does not hold back and wait until we get things right; rather, God loves us where we are and as we are. In the Incarnation, divine love has found us and has surrendered to us. It has handed itself over to us to do as we please.

What do we do with this tremendous gift of divine love so freely given to us? Some of us are blind to this love, so we ignore it. Others do not believe that God surrenders—completely in love with us—and therefore reject it. Still others fear that a God of self-giving love could be weak, and so they question the divine love. But for those who breathe in the Spirit of God, the surrender of God in love is the greatest act of humility, and one can only receive this love in poverty and humility. Receptivity marks the person of surrender.¹

Richard Rohr cites Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) and Clare of Assisi (1194–1253) as two powerful examples of people who surrendered their lives to God, and discovered who they really were in God:

God is the only one we can surrender to without losing ourselves. It's a paradox. I can't prove it to you, and it sure doesn't always feel like that, but I promise it's true. Francis and Clare lost and let go of all fear of suffering; all need for power, prestige, and possessions; and all need for their small self to be important—and they came out on the other side knowing something essential: who they really were in God and thus who they really were. Their house was then built on "bedrock," as Jesus says (Matthew 7:24). Such an ability to really change is often the fruit of suffering, and various forms of poverty, since the false self does not surrender without a fight to its death. If suffering is "whenever we are not in control" (my definition), then we can understand why some form of suffering is absolutely necessary to teach us how to live beyond the illusion of control and to give that control back to God.

Francis and Clare voluntarily leapt into the very fire from which most of us are trying to escape, with total trust that Jesus' way of the cross could not, and would not, be wrong.² □

1. Ilia Delio, *Ten Evenings with God* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2008), 79–80.
2. Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2014), 20–21.

