

# Interrupted By Hope

## ADVENT AS SCANDAL

*(Richard Rohr “Going to the Depth of the Manger” video)*

Advent is scandalous because it breaks into the everyday of our lives. It is not a far away event, but strikes at the very core of the mundane. It is about teen pregnancy, immigration, infanticide, assassinations, and homelessness. Theologian, Richard Rohr, helps us to see the gospel story in these particulars with which we are often uncomfortable.

### *Watch Film*

### *Questions for Reflection*

1. Rohr responds to the question, “When you think about the story do you set yourself in the manger and the way which he came, and the interaction with Mary?” by responding, “To the sophisticated, intellectual person, they are going to say don’t sentimentalize it. Don’t make too concrete, too specific, because then my mind will start fighting it.”

Why do we often seek to “spiritualize” and “universalize” the Christmas story, rather than becoming specific about the details? What about the details of the story that often makes it uncomfortable to believe?

2. Rohr comments, “That is the scandal of the particular; that is the scandal of the incarnation. Incarnation is always concrete, particular, momentary—now here, now this. When you struggle with the *now this* and go deep enough in one place, you know what happens, it universalizes.” He continues to say, “A good poet tries to lead you into the universal experience by leading you into the shock of a particular experience.”

How might the particulars of the Christmas story help us to have a universal appreciation for it? How might we identify with each detail of Jesus’s birth and the lives of those who were important in Jesus’ coming into the world?

3. Rohr continues to speak about moments of the particular: “When you have sunk

into one moment of love making with your spouse, of looking at your new little baby girl, when one moment becomes so perfect it becomes every moment. It becomes the whole show. *This is the way to that.*"

How can Advent help us to appreciate these moments in our lives? How can we focus on these particulars in order to find meaning in "every moment"?

4. When Rohr says, "You have got to be content with the ordinariness of the now, and the non-holiness of the now," the garbage truck begins to back up at the house and they hear it picking up the garbage. However, this is the point of the Christmas story; it is situated in the ordinary of every day lives.

How might looking at our ordinary experiences and encounters help us to understand the extraordinary?

5. Rohr reflects, "Secularism is the definite and inevitable child of Christianity. When you get the incarnation that nothing is unholy, that everything is a doorway to everything." He cites St. Bonaventure that "The centre is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere." What Rohr means is that religion and religious concepts can help us have access to ideas and images, but we need not be enslaved to these ideas and images.

How does the incarnation allow us to use different language to describe our religious experiences? How might this become a "doorway to everything"? How can we find other ways of speaking that might be able to take people into a deeper faith?

6. Rohr makes a provocative statement that "Sometimes the prostitutes, the drunkards, the tax collectors are actually ahead of us. Because their circumstance, their failure, their sin, if you will, they have to go to the depth, 'what does my life mean', 'who does God mean?'"

How are some of these people actually ahead of Christians who do not ask these questions about their faith? How can we ask the difficult questions about our faith and avoid the Christian clichés and pat answers?

7. Rohr talks about how St. Francis' most common prayer was "Who are you God, and who am I?"

What is this prayer trying to explore? Why is there "no end" to this prayer?