

Jesus: A Wisdom Teacher

Wisdom in Action

Father Richard teaches that to become wise, we must move into life itself, encountering people and places that challenge our ways of thinking.

Jesus came to teach us the way of wisdom by bringing us a message that offers to liberate us from both the lies of the world and the lies lodged within ourselves. The wisdom of the gospel creates an alternative consciousness, solid ground on which we can really stand, free from every social order and every ideology. The preaching of the gospel pulls the rug out from under us, and we have to put our life on a new footing. First we have to act. We have to cross over a threshold and live differently, so that we're compelled to think differently and ask challenging questions.

To get a real grasp of the gospel's truth, we have to cross over and enter into solidarity with at least one person who's different from us. For example, if we're afraid of a different culture or religion, then we'd best head in that direction. If a certain set of people scare us, then we have to get to know them. For a while, we have to endure being with people who live or think differently and learn to view reality from their standpoint. Jesus says we have to love our enemies, because doing so is the only way to grasp the whole picture. It's the only way to learn to love the other side of our own soul.

We can't try to solve it with our minds; we simply must act. The problem isn't solved in the head but in the gut, in the whole body (including the head, but that doesn't come until later). That's what I mean when I speak of the risk and leap of faith. This is a very Franciscan approach to life. St. Bonaventure and Duns Scotus put love as prior to knowledge, probably building on Francis' own headlong dive into life. First, we agree to give ourselves, and then we will understand, not the other way around. Otherwise, we get caught in all kinds of protective reasons why we don't need to give ourselves to life and we never make the dive.

¹ <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/wisdom-in-action/> , (accessed August 8, 2025).

First I have to act, and then I'll understand—meaning the whole person will understand. Then I'll know what I know. But I really won't know why I know, nor will I be able to offer proof to anyone else. It's the mysterious wisdom of faith, the wisdom we learn only when we are on the way. Nobody else can teach us this lesson, neither the pope nor biblical authorities; we have to go down this road ourselves. That's what the "primacy of action" means. Persist at that deeper place in yourself where the "both-and" is located. This is the place of the soul and the place of wisdom toward which we have to move. Don't be afraid! Fear comes from a need to control, and we are not in control anyway.

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Simplicity: The Freedom of Letting Go*, rev. ed. (Crossroad Publishing, 2003), 75, 76–78.

Storytelling in a small group or personal reflection. One by one, each person shares their answer to the first prompt below. Then go to the next prompt and so forth. A person can pass.

- 1. Share about a time in your life you had “to act” and you crossed “over a threshold and live differently.”** What happened?
- 2. Tell a story about being with and talking with another person whose basic worldview and life experiences were vastly different than yours.** How did that affect you at the time and now as you tell your story?
- 3. Share about a time in your life that you decided to act that gave you a greater understanding of “where the ‘both-and’ is located.”** “First I have to act, and then I'll understand—meaning the whole person will understand. Then I'll know what I know. But I really won't know why I know, nor will I be able to offer proof to anyone else. It's the mysterious wisdom of faith, the wisdom we learn only when we are on the way. Nobody else can teach us this lesson, neither the pope nor biblical authorities; we have to go down this road ourselves. That's what the “primacy of action” means. Persist at that deeper place in yourself where the “both-and” is located. This is the place of the soul and the place of wisdom toward which we have to move. Don't be afraid! Fear comes from a need to control, and we are not in control anyway.”

What was happening in your life when you decided to act? Where in “the place of the soul and the place of wisdom” did you move to? Say more.

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