

# Spirituality of the 12 Steps

## Step 5 Accountability IS Sustainability

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON  
RICHARD ROHR'S  
*BREATHING UNDERWATER*



• **Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs..**

- —Step 5 of the Twelve Steps

“All the time I kept silent and my bones wasted away. I groaned day in and day out, my heart grew parched as stubble in summer drought, and at last I admitted to you that I had sinned and no longer concealed my guilt.” —Psalm 32:3–5

“So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, and this will cure you.” —James 5:16

“If you forgive others their sins, they are indeed forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness from one another, they are held bound.” —John 20:23



## A Direct Encounter With God's Love

Yahweh's "punishment" comes precisely by loving and forgiving them and keeping his side of the covenant forever, which reduces them to "shame, silence, and confusion" (purgatory)



## Restorative Justice (Economy of Grace) vs. Retributive Justice

...sin and failure are, in fact, *the setting and opportunity for the transformation and enlightenment of the offender*—and then the future will take care of itself.

As any good therapist will tell you, you cannot heal what you do not acknowledge,

sin → punishment → repentance → transformation.

**sin → unconditional love → transformation → repentance**

*God does not love us if we change, God loves us so that we can change.* Only love effects true inner transformation, not duress, guilt, shunning, or social pressure. Love is not love unless it is totally free.



with our now “embarrassed and humiliated face” being our ongoing punishment and conversion!

**Grace is always a punishment for us.**

## The Sacrament of Confession as One Accountability System

“I announce to you in the name of God, and with the authority of the Holy Spirit, that all of your sins are forgiven,”

### Rohr on Sacrament of Reconciliation

Jesus addressed larger group

“disciples”

“General Confession”

Irish Monks...Anamchara

Binding and Loosing...magic vs. relational encounter



Step 5: It returned confession to all three levels—**God, self, and at least one other human being.** It returned the mystery of forgiveness to where Jesus first offered it—to **peer confession and peer counseling.** Yet Step 5 did not let anyone glide by too easily, but insisted on the sharing of **“the exact nature of our wrongs.”**

Restore Relationships,  
Integrity With Myself, and Communion With God



## Questions for Reflection

What comes first **unconditional love** or **punishment** for a sinner to find unity with him/her self, with the environment, with other humans, and with God (Transformation).

What experience of confession/reconciliation could you share with others. Do the concepts of *retributive justice* and *restorative justice* make sense to you?