



*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Jeremiah 29:11*

As we come to the end of this long, sad year I find it hard to know what to say that hasn't already been said. I think there is no doubt that we all want this year to come to an end and start new. We also know that just because we turn the page to a new year that the challenges we have faced in 2020 will not mysteriously go away. The changes we need in order to build the beloved community will require our best efforts.

It is typical to greet the new year with all kinds of resolutions: Be a better person, eat healthily, drink less, quit smoking, read, pray, exercise faithfully. I could go on, but you know what I mean. But I'm going to suggest that we not do that this year. We already have so much on our shoulders, so many challenges facing us, I think it might be better to let all the resolutions go by the wayside.

Instead, I wonder if we might do only a couple of things. As you know I am a follower of the teachings of Father Richard Rohr, Catholic priest and a member of the Franciscan Brothers. I've learned a lot from him over the years, and from his teachings I offer these two things we might consider for the coming year.

Let us in this new Year of our Lord, 2021, commit to practicing contemplation, whatever that means to you. For some it may mean walking, for other perhaps a practice of sitting in silence, some will choose to pray and yet for others it might mean listening to beautiful music. The list is endless. Then, having spent time in holy contemplation, let us commit to right action. Again, that may mean something different to each person. Some will want to volunteer at a local food pantry while others will commit to a practice of loving others expansively and some might determine to work for a non-profit or political office.

You see, Father Rohr is clear that contemplation without action can turn to self-absorbed piety. And action without contemplation can lead us to believe that we are the cause of changing our corner of the world and forget that God has a hand in all that was, is and will be.

As part of my contemplation this year I am going to meditate on and use for my mantra the beloved scripture from the Prophet Jeremiah, who spoke on behalf of God to the people saying, For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then I will turn my attention to caring for God's people and God's world. Join me, won't you?

*Holy One, draw us close to you as this new year arrives. Help us to love you, your people and your creation with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and trust your promise to give us a future with hope. Amen.*

