Following Jesus by resisting utopian idealism

We should not be surprised or scandalized by the sinful and the tragic. Do what you can to *be* peace and to *do* justice, but never expect or demand perfection on this earth. It usually leads to a false moral outrage, a negative identity, intolerance, paranoia, and self-serving crusades against “the contaminating element,” instead of “becoming a new creation” ourselves (Galatians 6:15).

We must resist all utopian ideologies and heroic idealisms that are not tempered by patience and taught by all that is broken, flawed, sinful, and poor. Jesus is an utter *realist* and does not exclude the problem from the solution. Work for win/win situations. Mistrust all win/lose dichotomies.

The following of Jesus is not a “salvation scheme” or a means of creating social order (which appears to be what most folks want religion for), as much as it is *a vocation to share the fate of God for the life of the world.* Some people are overly invested in religious ceremonies, rituals, and rules that are all about who’s in and who’s out. Jesus did not come to create a spiritual elite or an exclusionary system. He invited people to “follow” him by personally bearing the mystery of human death and resurrection. Of itself, this task does not feel “religious,” which is why it demands such faith to trust it.

Those who agree *to carry and love what God loves*, both the good and the bad of human history, and to pay the price for its reconciliation within themselves—these are the followers of Jesus. They are the leaven, the salt, the remnant, the mustard seed that God can use to transform the world. The cross is the dramatic image of what it takes to be such a *usable* one for God.

**Gateway to Silence:**When I am weak I am strong.

* Franciscan Father Richard Rohr, “Following Jesus,” Wednesday, July 27, 2016. Adapted from his book [*Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*](http://store.cac.org/Everything-Belongs-The-Gift-of-Contemplative-Prayer_p_17.html) (The Crossroad Publishing Company: 1999), 179-180.