



# THE MARK

January 2006  
Volume 18  
Number 1

A Publication of The Church of Conscious Harmony • A Contemplative Christian Community



A L I F E I N C H R I S T



The Church of Conscious Harmony  
A Contemplative Christian Community

7406 Newhall Lane Austin, Texas 78746

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# All Hope Is In the Lord

by Tim Cook

I'm writing this article at the beginning of Advent. By the time it has been published and distributed, Christmas will have come and gone and the New Year celebrations will barely be over. In that short space of four weeks a lot will have happened to us, both personally and in the world at large; some of it pleasant, some of it difficult, some of it surprising and new, some of it banal and old. Some of our number will die and some will be born. We may have read of natural disasters that haven't occurred yet or learn of resolutions to the challenges that still linger from those that have already happened. In other words, life will go on pretty much as usual. We can never know the specifics in advance but we can be certain that life on earth will go on pretty much as it has in the knowable past.

Last Friday, I heard a guest commentator on a public radio news program speak about how unusually dispirited she felt at the beginning of this particular Advent. She said that Advent usually inspires her and fills her with hope. She spoke of the words of Isaiah as they are quoted in Handel's Messiah that promise that God will make the "crooked places

straight and the rough places plain" and said that she just couldn't feel the hope in it this year. The reason, she said, was that this year had been a year of such enormous catastrophes. Her list included the tsunami, wars, hurricanes, floods and earthquakes that left millions in unimaginable suffering and dislocation. It can indeed be discouraging and disheartening if we look at the conditions of our world, expecting them to be better. They have been like this every Advent and back into the dim past of humanity. The news isn't new.

What is different, I believe, is improved communication, faster speed of life and increasingly crowded circumstances. The same sort of stuff has always been happening. It's just happening faster and packed in tighter. We become aware of all events, all at once, all over the globe and so our feeling of security is threatened. It's not that anything new is happening; what has always gone on has just gotten so obvious that we can't live in denial of it anymore. If we put our hope in the world, we will always be disappointed because the unpredictable, ever-changing world is always passing

away. One of my teachers, referring to our future in the physical world said, "Things could get better, things could get worse, things could stay the same – or you could *understand*."

We just can't count on conditions in the material realm to bring us the satisfaction, security and stability they seem to promise but have never and can't ever deliver. Solomon, the epitome of wisdom, understood this and expressed in Ecclesiastes,

*These are the words of the Quester, David's son and king in Jerusalem: Smoke, nothing but smoke. [That's what the Quester says.] There's nothing to anything - it's all smoke. What's there to show for a lifetime of work, a lifetime of working your fingers to the bone?*

*One generation goes its way, the next one arrives, but nothing changes - it's business as usual for old planet Earth. The sun comes up and the sun goes down, then does it again, and again - the same old round. The wind blows south, the wind blows north. Around and around and around it blows, blowing this way, then that - the whirling, erratic wind. All the rivers flow into the sea, but the sea never fills up. The rivers keep*

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*flowing to the same old place, and then start all over and do it again. Everything's boring, utterly boring - no one can find any meaning in it. Boring to the eye, boring to the ear. What was will be again, what happened will happen again. There's nothing new on this earth. Year after year it's the same old thing. Does someone call out, "Hey, this is new?" Don't get excited - it's the same old story. Nobody remembers what happened yesterday. And the things that will happen tomorrow? Nobody'll remember them either. Call me "the Quester." I've been king over Israel in Jerusalem. I looked most carefully into everything, searched out all that is done on this earth. And let me tell you, there's not much to write home about. God hasn't made it easy for us. I've seen it all and it's nothing but smoke - smoke, and spitting into the wind. (Ecclesiastes 1: 1-14 The Message)*

Now, Solomon was not a nihilist and he was not depressed. He was simply stating our human situation clearly and unequivocally and offering all who would read his words the benefit of his wisdom and experience.

The reason we never find satisfaction, stability or security in the material plane is that, contrary to appearances, we are not material creatures. We are spirit,

manifesting through material bodies, and our true nature can only be satisfied, stable and secure through the experience of our true invisible spiritual identity. That's why Jesus urged us, "Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars." We must remember, though, that the heaven Jesus speaks of is within us right now. It is the state of consciousness we come to know and abide in as we practice letting go of our concerns, preferences, judgments and fears in our twice-daily practice of Centering Prayer. Jesus assures us that it is the Father's good pleasure to give us this Kingdom. Our part is to use our free will to give him the opportunity to do it by giving him our attention.

As we begin this new year let's make space to consider where we've put our treasure. Is our hope invested in the unrealistic idea that somehow things in the world are going to get better? If we find that this is our experience, we can prayerfully reconsider airy options and ask for God's help in investing our hope in his very real presence in our lives, and in his power to enliven our lives with spiritual freedom, no matter what seems to be going on in the world.

In the story of Jesus' friends, Mary and Martha, Jesus makes a potent statement that applies to all

humanity. Martha is busy taking care of business and she complains to Jesus that her sister, Mary won't help her. Mary is just gazing at Christ in contemplation. He responds to Martha, the busy part of you and me, with a simple wisdom teaching,

*A woman by the name of Martha welcomed him and made him feel quite at home. She had a sister, Mary, who sat before the Master, hanging on every word he said. But Martha was pulled away by all she had to do in the kitchen. Later, she stepped in, interrupting them. "Master, don't you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand." The Master said, "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it - it's the main course, and won't be taken from her." (Luke 10: 38-42 The Message)*

Both contemplation and attention to the world, the kitchen, are good; but only one of them, contemplation, is of the essence of our lives and can never be taken away. Whatever events arise in the world, this will be a good year to discover that the only real hope for humanity and each human is to attend to the Lord.

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# Resting In God

by Barbara Cook

Mary is at rest, gazing at the Lord, listening attentively, hanging on his every word. Martha comes over to them harried, as she is preparing a dinner for Jesus and company and tells Jesus to make Mary help her. Jesus replies, “Martha, Martha you are worried and troubled over much; but Mary has the better part and that will not be taken from her.” Looking at this teaching from a contemplative point of view, we see that Martha is serving the Lord. This is a high calling, but she appears to be a bit overwhelmed and a little resentful of her work and her sister’s lack of participation.

I particularly enjoy the codependent way she tells Jesus to fix the situation. Mary is resting in God, gazing at the Lord. She is resting in God. Contemplative rest means that one becomes still of outer and inner action and simply attentive to the Lord. That is the disposition we learn in Centering Prayer.

Centering Prayer, as we know, is a relationship with God and a discipline in service of deepening

that relationship. This deepening relationship with the Lord through Centering Prayer progresses through stages. It begins with Contemplative Prayer or resting in God. The fruit of Contemplative Prayer is the Contemplative Life, a state of consciousness which is always at rest in God whether in action or repose. Resting in God is a technical term which means always being aware that one is in God no matter what the outer conditions may appear to be. It is living in “the peace that passes understanding.” So whether serving or resting, one is coming from the deep knowledge, presence and love of God.

Father Thomas says that this is still not the best part, though it is the better part. The best part, he says, is to be resurrected with Christ as Mary and Martha’s brother Lazarus was. Not just to live in constant union with God, but to allow God to become fully us, to die to any separation. As St. Paul said, “Now I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” Each of us carries the spark of the

Divine. St. Paul also said, “Christ in you, your hope of Glory.” It is a definite possibility for each of us that the spark of Christ can grow in us as we take up and live the spiritual journey, as we are doing by consenting to God’s plan through the practice of Centering Prayer. To let go of Martha’s disposition of worry and troubled co-dependence and move to resting in God, no matter what we are doing, allowing the glory of Christ and his love to become us; this is our destiny, every one of us. If we only say “yes” to God, we will have Life and have it abundantly. What a gift it would be, to bear God’s love into a world like this.

As we enter into a new year, I pray that each of us will say “yes” to God’s wish for us to be one with His Love and Gracious Presence, now and forever. We can give up our self-centeredness and become God-centered, Love-centered – for ourselves, for our loved ones and for the world. We do it one prayer at a time, day by day. May the Glory of Christ, our hope of glory, grow in each of us.



## CCH BOOKSTORE New Beginnings

*New Seeds of Contemplation*  
Community reading begins on Jan 9

### **Books that Guide Our Daily Living:**

*Daily Reader*  
by Father Thomas Keating

*The Mystic Hours*  
by Brother Wayne Teasdale

*365 Dalai Lama*  
by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

*The Joy in Living* by Mother Teresa

*Earth from Above 365 Days*  
by Yann Arthus-Bertrand

### **Meditation Supplies:**

Zafu's & Zabuton's -  
Meditation Cushions and Mats  
Singing Bowls and Meditation Timers  
Tibetan and Japanese Incense and Supplies

### **Also available:**

*Magnificat*  
a monthly handbook of bible readings  
based on the liturgical calendar.  
Each day there is a Morning Prayer,  
psalm & scripture readings for  
Mass and Evening Prayer.

This is the book that is used for our midweek  
Contemplative Communion Service  
each Wednesday at 6 PM.

## **Discerning the Will of God**

with Father Carl Arico

January 9-10 7:30pm - 9:00pm

Father Carl Arico will be teaching from  
The Contemplative Life Program booklet entitled "Discernment."

This booklet is available from the Bookstore  
and it is requested that you read the booklet prior.

One half of the proceeds from this event will be donated  
to Contemplative Outreach.

*Pre-registration is necessary through the Church office. Class \$30 | Booklet \$20*

## **JANUARY Calendar**

Visit [consciousharmony.org](http://consciousharmony.org)  
for a complete listing of events

### **Special Events**

#### **"Discerning the Will of God"**

Father Carl Arico  
Jan 9-10 7:30-9:00pm  
Preregistration is required through the office.

#### **1/2 Day Centering Prayer Retreat**

Jan 14 8:30am-12:30pm

#### **Intro to Centering Prayer**

Jan 28 8:30am-3:30pm  
plus six Mondays classes  
Jan 23 - February 27 7:30pm

#### **Song and Silence**

Jan 28 10am-3pm

### **Monthly**

#### **Community Workday**

Jan 21 9am-12noon

### **Weekly**

#### **Centering Prayer Group**

Mondays 7:30-9pm  
Wednesday 7:30-9pm

#### **Tuesday Enrichment 7:30-8:30pm**

Sacred Chanting Jan 3  
Gurdjieff Music Jan 17

#### **Prayer Circle**

Wednesdays 9:15am

#### **Contemplative Lunch**

Wednesdays 12noon-1pm

#### **Mid-Week Communion Service**

Wednesdays 6-7pm

#### **Yoga**

Thursdays 6-7pm

#### **Intro to The Work Class**

Thursdays 7:30-9pm  
The 1st six weeks of the year will be teachings from  
"Simple Explanation of Work Ideas" which is a class  
required for Church membership.

### **Daily**

#### **Daily Centering Prayer Service**

M-F 7-7:35am



# Annual Aim: A Life In Christ

by Mary Anne Best

*I seek now to be ordinary, because just being ordinary of itself is an expression of Divinity. The truth of my Real Self can be discovered through the pathways of everyday life.*

How does one have a home in Christ? How do we find intimacy with another in Christ? What is our relationship to money in Christ? How do we experience work in Christ? How do we experience a life not divided into “ordinary” life and “spiritual” life? Beyond our sits, our studies, our devotions, our prayers, our practice – how do we live a fully integrated life *en Christo*? This year we will explore these and other aspects of ordinary life. Together we will attempt to discover what it is to be *en Christo* in the midst of any and all aspects of modern, contemporary life as a good householder on The Way. How does ordinary life, with all of its routines, commitments, responsibilities and distractions, become imbued with Divine Presence?

The apostle Paul used the phrase ‘in Christ,’ *en Christo*, 164 times in his letters. In the Gospel of John, John uses the phrase ‘abide in Him’ 53 times. The concept is important in order to understand what we are and what we are to become. ‘En’ means *within*. Thomas Merton says,

*We have the choice of two identities: the external mask which seems to be real and which lives by a shadowy autonomy for the brief moment of earthly existence, and the hidden, inner person who seems to us to be nothing, but who can give himself eternally to the truth in whom he subsists. It is this inner self that is taken up into the mystery of Christ, by His love, by the Holy Spirit, so that in secret we live ‘in Christ.’*

As I write this article it is the week before Christmas: Advent beckons – the expectation is palpable. I am reminded that the urgings of the Old Testament are to climb the mountain to the Lord. The New

## EPIPHANY

The word ‘Epiphany’ is Greek, meaning ‘to show forth’ or ‘manifestation.’

It is the final and grandest day of the Christmas season, the day on which the wise men coming from the East, following a star and bearing gifts for royalty, made their way to Bethlehem to worship the King.

*(Matthew 1: 1-12).*

The Magi came from the ends of the earth and thus are symbols for all time of genuine seekers of Truth.

The manifestation of the Child’s divine nature to the Magi signifies the call to divine union extended to us, to every person – the invitation to manifest fully who we were created to be.



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Testament assures us that God comes to us. Am I ready to receive the Extraordinary Gift? What does it mean for me at this time?

Recently Tim read the wondrous message from Mr. Gurdjieff given to his friends on the evening of December 24, 1948. It would be G's last Christmas on Earth. That evening G had asked his friends to bring flags from all over the world. They were hung around the room, and an enneagram was placed in the center. After dinner, around midnight, he said:

*I wish give real Christmas present. Imagine Christ. Somewhere in space is. (Mr. G forms an oval with both his hands.) Make contact. Not to center, but to outside, periphery. Draw from there, draw in, I. Settle in you, Am. Do everyday. Wish to become Christ. Become. Be.*

I am mindful of the members of our blessed community all over the world – T.C. and Rinchen in Dharamsala, Mark in New York, Gail and Father Carl in New Jersey, Father Thomas and the brother monks in Snowmass, Steve in Kansas, Frenchy and Ron in California – to name a few. We come together in our common hunger, our common wish, to know, to be able, and to be what is Real. We long to come to that perimeter, to be transformed into

the fullness of our humanity. Our paths and our circumstances of daily life vary widely, yet we are part of one body nonetheless. In Christianity we call this the One True Body, the Mystical Body of Christ. It is in Him that we come to Who we are.

It is this inner self that can abide on a mountain top in India, in a monastery in Snowmass, a prison in California, or a suburban residence in Austin, Texas, and, at the same time, abide in the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the life, the one life, we are called to, as promised in the Gospels and – said in other ways – in all esoteric teachings. This is the living hope that the world so urgently needs – to incarnate as radiant points of light in the darkness. We can be those points.

**Consecration:  
On Setting Intention**

Our aim is *A Life in Christ*, ONE life in Christ. We open ourselves to the presence and action of the Spirit, here and now, in the ordinariness of daily life. We aim to reach beyond our own limitations and weaknesses and contradictions and unworthiness. Quite simply, we wish to know Christ and to reflect His light into the whole human family, into all of life. We wish to witness to the love that reveals the Face of God. This

is the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom we were meant to enter and know on this earth, in this life.

In setting your annual intention, you may wish to follow this method:

**Prayer  
for Setting Intention:**

Call upon our Father, the Creator of all, for guidance in forming your intention – an intention that serves God's will.

Open your heart to a disposition of listening, consent, surrender.

After a time in the silence, write down your intention and return it in the box provided in the church entry, or simply mail your card to the church.

Say a closing prayer of thanksgiving and gratitude, such as the following:

*Lord, You promised that I may be one, as You are One in the Father. That I may be brought to perfection as You were brought to perfection. That I am loved as You were loved by the Father.*

*Grant me the wisdom, the grace, the courage, the strength to follow the course You set before me.*

*Grant that my intention be for Your glory, the glory of Your Kingdom on earth, and that my joy may be complete in You.*

*Amen.*

. . . [Mr. Gurdjieff] worked unceasingly to gather round him a group of people ready to share a life wholly turned toward the development of consciousness . . . and brought them to the conviction that, to be complete, their experience must include at one and the same time, all the aspects of a human being  
And this is the very idea of the harmonious development of man.

Translator's Note, G.I. Gurdjieff, Meetings with Remarkable Men

## The Wish

Renew our commitment to the spiritual journey, moving ever deeper together as a community of practice.

All for the glory of God, for our transformation, and the transformation of all humanity

*As God brings the 'new man' to life in interior silence Christ's view of things becomes more important to you than your own. Then, He asks you to live that new life in the circumstances of everyday life, contradicted by noise, opposition and anxieties.*

*The alternation between deep silence and action gradually brings the two together. You become fully integrated, a contemplative and yet fully capable of action at the same time.*

Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*

## The Invitation

Set your intention for the journey. Deepen your practice. Receive in love and trust the radical love of God. Radiate His Light into all of life. Rejoice.

*Gloria in Excelsis Deo.*

The Church of Conscious Harmony is a community of intentional practice aimed at regeneration of the old man into the New Man . . . a community in which to grow from the illusion of separation to the fully enlightened experience of conscious union with the Living God . . . through the radical transformation of the heart into the very heart and being of Christ . . . united in the One Body to all.

## Participation

You will receive an invitation to participate, either at church, or, if you are out-of-town and on the mailing list, via the mail. Ponder your intention and note your willingness to participate by writing a statement of intention on the card provided.

Return the card with your statement of intention to the church, either via the mail, or place directly in the box in the entry to the sanctuary. The office will copy your intention and hold with all others. Intentions will be consecrated during the Sunday service, January 29

The original document of your intention will be returned to you, along with a package of cards that we will follow each month. Each month we will study and practice a different aspect of *A Life in Christ*.



*Here, by Grace, we aim to know the Living God.  
We are fed the teachings. We are called to practice.  
We know community. We are grateful. Let us awaken. Now.  
Gloria in Excelsis Deo!*



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## Community Aim for January: First Things First

by Joyce Weedman

*Few things are needed, indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part; It will not be taken from her. ~Luke 10: 42*

My attention has always been on others, or on “getting the job done.” My mother always taught me that putting my attention on myself, or on anything non-productive, was just plain selfish. I grew up a Martha, always busy with something or someone that seemed important at the time.

Father Thomas Keating says that we have both Mary and Martha within each of us, representing the inner and the outer parts of ourselves. Both Mary and Martha, sisters from Bethany described in the Gospel of Luke, served Jesus. Martha anxiously fusses and frets, then becomes indignant when she isn’t appreciated. Martha feels far too familiar to me.

Mary, meanwhile, was giving the gift of her presence. To be fully present to another is sacred; it is

the kindest thing we can ever do. Mary was listening to Jesus at a much deeper level than ears can hear. “*Mary has chosen the better part...*” Father Thomas says that one who hears the word of God on this level takes it in and keeps it.

In *The Better Part*, Father Thomas suggests that Martha’s motivation for service is suspect, and that therein lies real selfishness. Martha’s intention, though it was unconscious, was about satisfying her own deep needs. Father Thomas writes that the Martha in each of us is driven by one or all of the three basic energy centers: security and survival; affection and esteem; and power and control. Unobserved, these energies remain secret, influencing our behavior and our decision-making processes. This is the false self with its self-centered programs for happiness

that cannot possibly work.

No wonder Martha and I have both experienced so many of the same afflictive emotions – anger, jealousy, envy, and pride – which are “all rooted in the fact that we don’t know what our real motivation is.” As Father Thomas reminds us, “Motivation is everything in Christianity.”

Martha’s comeuppance came from Jesus. “*Martha, Martha...*” Mine has come from an illness that is the direct result of not attending to myself, not paying attention to Joyce. Our teacher, Tim Cook, tells a memorable story about learning to ride a motorcycle on mountain roads. He keeps drifting toward the edge of the road, as if the motorcycle can sense his fear of flying off the side of the

*continued*

mountain. His instructor says: "Look where you *want* to go, Tim!" If Tim's intention was to stay on the road, he needed to put his attention on staying on the road.

It has been said that if you don't know your intention, look at the result. Clearly, my attention has been on relationships, career, and living a self-indulgent life rather than on health, well-being, and a living relationship with God. For most of my life, I was blind to my true motivations, which came from the unhealed energy centers, primarily the desire for affection and esteem.

With a semblance of clarity about motivation, I can now turn toward the contemplative response to life. How? "Do what you are doing," says Father Thomas. The key is bringing my attention to the present moment.

So now it is time to set priorities for the rest of my life – to put first things first, to establish a pure intention. And after sitting with this wish, and pondering it, this intention must look something like: Remember God. That which gives me hope is that I do have a hunger for Mary's part. It is a desire for stillness and deep silence and a way of being that has nothing to do with doing. It is to be invisible, with no need to be heard or justified. It is to be present, to give

attention to the remarkable in the now. It is to listen to the Lord, to live in God.

*"Few things are needed, indeed only one,"* Jesus told Martha.

But I'm not going to leave this world and go on an extended retreat to do nothing but listen to God. So the task at hand is to integrate Mary's prayerful attentiveness with an immersion in Martha's activity and service. The challenge is to turn to God in the now-ness of whatever situation I find myself in, rather than waiting for my prayer time.

If I thought that a friend had something very important to tell me, I would give my full attention to her words. It is time for me to give my full attention to God. After that, everything else will happen the only way it can.

Having a real intention comes from something very deep, from the hunger of the heart, from the Divine Indwelling speaking from within us. A deep intention eventually gets to where it wants to go.

Knowing how easily I forget aims, wishes and intentions, I start with a simple prayer of intention: Help me remember, God. There is no humility greater than the humility of forgetting. Again and again. Forgetting to remember God.



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