



# THE MARK

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The Church of Conscious Harmony  
A Contemplative Christian Community

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# Food for Christ

by Tim Cook

The powerful and culturally influential advertising industry that shapes so much of our personal and societal consciousness is well aware of the power of impressions. In fact they have developed a very advanced scientific approach to producing extremely specific impressions that move us to become consumers of the products they sell. Form, color, texture, line, movement, placement, pace and sound are all measured to precise degrees to produce influences that cause us to act as they wish us to act.

From conception to death we are surrounded and influenced by the environment of impressions that we both ingest and produce. Impressions are one of the foods that, like air and vegetables, we require for our very existence. We can't live without them, but since we are swimming in largely unnoticed oceans of impressions, it is good for each of us to notice and explore the specific ways they influence our lives.

The word "impression" is derived from a Latin root,

*impressus*, to "press into or imprint." An impression is the effect or influence produced on the mind, senses or feelings by an externally or internally generated experience. Our very first impressions were the soothing sounds of our mother's heart, blood and breath in the in utero environment. As we grew in experience our horizons broadened to receive impressions generated by social interactions, schooling and cultural conditions. Some early impressions were shocking and frightening and may have left a lasting influence on our adult psychology. You may recall early humiliations, threats, horror movies, nightmares or other experiences that still produce tension when they are remembered many years later. Examples like these make it easy to see just how powerful impressions are in our lives.

In his *Psychological Commentaries On The Teachings Of Gurdjieff And Ouspensky*, Dr. Maurice Nicoll, writing in 1948, offers his remarkable insights on impressions:

*Both when waking and sleeping in the ordinary sense a man is getting impressions. When asleep in bed, for example, many impressions come from his body, from being hot or cold, from pain or comfort, from muscles subserving breathing, from heart beating and so on. If all impressions could be cut off the man would die at once. Now let us take a man or woman in love who has not heard from the beloved. Suppose they begin to pine, waste away and get ill. Let us suppose they are taken to hospital. The doctors prescribe more nourishing food and drink, or they recommend a change of air and so on. Yet the poor patient remains ill, weak, wretched. Port wine every hour is no good. Then suddenly a telegram arrives: the beloved is still alive and is coming to-morrow. Do you not think that suddenly this woman, this man, becomes quite different? Of course. And what is the reason? What is this strange food that has made the change so rapidly? This strange food is the food of impressions. How was this food administered? by telegram - by the wonderful news.*

*Now long ago, when I and a few others were fighting for the*

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*recognition of the psychological factor in medicine, I sometimes used an illustration of the above kind - but it was met very heavily by the doctors of those days. I have little doubt that they would have liked to have the bit of paper on which the marvelous words were written, and weigh it and measure it and analyze its chemical components so as to find a physical cause for the transformation in the patient. I am sure that some of them, by sending similar telegrams to patients not in love, and getting no results, would say that it is obvious that telegrams were of no medical value. Well - that was the state of darkness in the first two decades of this century when the battle for the psychological factor in illness was being waged. And then came "shell-shock" - and actually eminent medical men searched in the blood for some unusual platelet, or some foreign body, to account for a man breaking down who had been in the trenches for months and months under heavy shelling, sniping and mortar bombs. Yes - this psychological factor was not recognized distinctly. Now if your food of impressions is nothing but daily horrors then it will be very bad food and will make you ill just as bad air or bad food without vitamins will make you ill - give*

*you scurvy and so on. I often think that the whole range of physical illnesses due to lack of vitamins, such as scurvy, etc. can be represented on the mental plane by a correspondence. A narrow, prejudiced, mean person, a jealous person, a negative person, for example, will take in negative impressions and so be ill on that level, whereas a person more generous and broad-minded will not. We pay for every wrong attitude, for everything we do not forgive, for everything we lie to ourselves about, for every negative state.*

The divisions that we experience in our world and the separation we feel from God are all *seeming and apparent* and not actual and factual. They are a habitual state of consciousness and they are all the result of impressions that have been handed down through countless generations of forebears; each of whom received the acculturated results of those who had gone before, added their own impressions, and unconsciously passed them along. We are each participating in the same process right now. Tribalism, nationalism, classism, racism, sexism, narcissism and all the "isms" we can think of are a part of the collective sin that is and has been making the human

race sick. The 20th chapter of Exodus refers to this very process when it declares that the children of the third and fourth generations are punished for the sins of the parents. Now let's be careful to remember here that sin does not refer to bad people doing wrong things. It actually refers to the underlying chronic human condition of separation, alienation and division in consciousness. The word translated as "sin" is actually referring to "missing the mark," as an archer would miss a target if he shot toward something else.

To sin against the One God who is the One Life of the "Oneiverse" is to live as if God, in his perfect and Absolute Unity, is absent. God cannot be absent and God cannot be divided. Any impression of separation misses the mark and is *in reality* a fundamental lie, an impression, that ultimately makes us psychologically sick, like tainted or rotten food makes our bodies sick. Anyone who has a car radio can do a simple, easy and convincing experiment with this idea. Turn on a classical music station, listen for a few minutes and notice through self-observation the feelings in the belly, the tension in the body and

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## Community Aim for February: Impressions in Christ

by Mary Theriot

Everyone who lives on milk lacks experience of the Word of righteousness. Solid food is for the mature, whose faculties are trained by practice to discern Good -*Hebrews 5: 13-14*

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In the Work, we are taught that there are three kinds of food necessary for man to survive. The first is, of course, physical food, the second is air, and the third is the food of impressions. My understanding of the food of impressions is everything I take in through my senses. If I take into account only what is passing into my awareness through my thoughts, the number of impressions I'm ingesting is astounding. When I add to that all that I see, hear, etc., the number grows infinitely. It's easy to see how a heck of a good case of indigestion could start.

My own experience with the food of impressions in daily life has taught me that choosing

carefully what I feed on is essential. Just as I would assess the nutritional value of a substance I am about to eat, my wish is that I check the spiritual value of the impressions I'm taking in. One most helpful tool for me has been affirmative prayer.

I began repeating three times each morning, immediately upon awakening, the following affirmative prayer -

*"My first desire is to please God. The first love of my heart, the first ambition of my soul, the first goal of my will and reason is God alone."*

My hope was that, although it did not seem true to me at first, it would enter into my being and become true. Before I began this

prayer practice, the first food of impressions that I started my day with was usually an inventory of aches and pains mixed with a "Thank you, God, for this beautiful new day," thrown in every now and again. What happened after a short time of consciously praying and really taking in those words was that it did become true for me. I found myself questioning thoughts and actions as to whether or not they would please God. In feeding on the affirmative prayer each morning, I found my thoughts turning to God a little more quickly in each small crisis of the moment. As Maurice Nicoll says in the Psychological Commentaries, "As you begin to

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think real thoughts . . . you will find your thinking is nourished from a Source that never fails.” That’s how it felt to me. It became alive and fed me at those times that I forgot to make the nutritious choices on my own.

Another most wonderful benefit from this affirmative prayer was that Scripture took on a new luster for me. I am reminded of the beautiful chant we sing here, “If you make a place for Me, I will live in you forever.” As my heart expanded with the love of God, Scripture became alive for me. The words now have more meaning and speak to me right where I am. I now daily include the Magnificat and Bible with my morning Commentary readings and can’t imagine beginning my day without them.

The Church has many teachings and offerings that are vital to our healthy intake of impressions. I, like everyone, am taking part in a feast each time I partake of the gifts we are given here. The bookstore is a place where I especially feel well fed. Simply being in the bookstore and taking in the impressions of the fragrant smell of incense, the

beauty of the décor, and the presence of the wisdom in each volume is sweetly satisfying.

The real food, though, is in the books themselves. We are enormously blessed to have for our nourishment the works of the greatest spiritual teachers and masters of all time. Two of the books that have made the biggest impact on me are *Awareness* by Anthony De Mello and *Living Time* by Maurice Nicoll. Feeding myself by reading and sometimes struggling through an intellectually challenging Fourth Way book has served me immensely. Though at times I feel I’m understanding and taking in nothing from them, insights from some of the hardest books I’ve wrestled with have shown up when least expected.

My last offering regarding the food of impressions is an exercise I like to try as often as I can remember. It involves noticing an incoming impression and, in that very moment, separating myself from the incoming impression and attempting to let it enter in a brand new way. I have often practiced this in my interactions with others. Once, in the supermarket with

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#### NEWSLETTER

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Sierra, my granddaughter, an incredibly loud and emotional outburst happened (hers, not mine). Feeling completely embarrassed and frustrated, I chose to view the whole thing as if I was seeing it for the first time. Needless to say, this was surely *not* the first time. What happened that changed everything was that instead of allowing frustration and anger to come in and poison me, I saw her differently. I heard what she was really saying, not what it appeared she was saying. She was quiet in seconds. There was no more need for the temper fit. There was no place for the temper fit. I allowed her to be heard. I allowed her to *be*.

Many of us may have assessed our dietary habits at the beginning of the new year, and made efforts to take in healthier kinds of foods. This same kind of diligence is needed concerning our psychological and spiritual diets. Let us, as a community, become conscious of the impressions we are taking in this month. Thank you, God, for the food of impressions and for the opportunity to choose a Life in Christ.

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## Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way

by Lewis Bullard

Several years ago, Lee Iacocca, head of Chrysler Motors, made a series of TV commercials that ended with the challenge to, “Lead, follow, or get out of the way.” I am reasonably certain that he did not intend for the part about getting out of the way to be the main thrust of his challenge, but those of us on a path to personal transformation know that we must get out of the way and let God lead us, because our false personalities don’t have a clue where to go or what to do.

Many of you in the CCH family know that I have been in failing health for over a year now. In that time, I have had several clear examples of God’s will working in my life. I would like to share a couple of these with you to help “re-remember” the lesson to let God be in charge.

Many of you are also aware that Gay and I have been living on beautiful acreage near Dripping

Springs for the past 15 years. We also had the blessing and challenge of having Gay’s 98 year-old mother, La Luz, living on our property in her own home. When my health began to fail, I realized it was time to “do something,” because I was no longer capable of keeping the place in satisfactory condition. We put out a few feelers to La Luz about moving. She was adamantly against such a plan – she had no desire to leave her gardens.

As time went by and it became more critical, La Luz came to us one day and said she thought it was time for her to move to an assisted living environment. We made the arrangements and moved her in October of 2004. Then we made it known to some friends and neighbors that we planned to sell our place in June when Gay would close her piano studio. The plan was to buy a large, comfortable RV, place our belongings in storage and hit the road for a couple of

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years to enjoy the nomadic lifestyle of the “full-time RVers” while my health would permit. I’m sure you’ve all heard the way to make God laugh is to tell him your plans; this plan must’ve given him a real belly laugh!

In March, long before we had planned to list our property, a young couple came to us and explained that a mutual friend had said we might be selling and could they come take a look at it. They came, looked, and said they would like to buy it, and made us an offer for more than I ever expected to get; we made a deal and sold it. About this time, my health took another turn south and it became apparent that the life of the full-time RVer was not going to be an option. Now we had to find a place to live that we could use as a home base. We couldn’t find anything in the Austin or San Antonio areas that met our requirements. One day, on more or less of a whim, we went with some neighbors to just look at Sun City in Georgetown. Before the day was over we had contracted to buy a maintenance-free home there.

By the time we got moved in and reasonably settled, we finally got a valid diagnosis of my health

problem. It would require a high level of health care management, extensive use of specialty equipment and services on a long-term basis. God’s hand in all this immediately became apparent. He also was about two months ahead of us in his planning at each step of the way. He had been steering us to Sun City because it is virtually on the doorstep of one of central Texas’ premier hospitals, Scott and White. Our new home is about ten minutes from their clinic in Georgetown, where we have available to us the entire gamut of medical services needed.

So, just get out of the way and follow God’s divine will. He knows where he is going with us.

The next incident is more recent and illustrates the fact that our false personality can really get us in trouble if we let it. A few months ago, my health took another turn for the worse. I got very nauseated and could not, or would not, eat or drink for fear of the consequences. As a result, I got steadily more dehydrated and malnourished. The doctors and my wife, Gay, were saying that if I didn’t get better soon, I’d have to go into the hospital. I didn’t want to go, so I began to pray with great

intensity, asking God to make me better so I could stay home. My false personality kept assuring me that I could fight this from home on an outpatient basis just as well as in the hospital.

The net result of all my prayers was that I kept deteriorating to the point that I could no longer sit up by myself; I was helplessly weak. One day, in the wee hours of the morning, I suddenly recalled a conversation that I had been involved in that had occurred about 30 years ago. A small group of my colleagues and I were in the faculty lounge at Jacksonville University having a not-too-deep discussion on a variety of subjects such as religion, philosophy and prayer. One professor said that he did not believe in prayer, that God never seemed to answer most prayers, and when he did it was usually some insignificant thing that probably would have rectified itself anyway. An old Jewish rabbi in the group interrupted and said, “Well now, what we fail to realize and should take into account is that ‘no’ is a legitimate answer.”

I saw immediately that God was, indeed, answering my prayers and he was saying, “No, you belong

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*Lead, Follow... continued*

in the hospital.” When I told Gay that I was ready to go, she hurried around and got me admitted that morning. I began to respond immediately to the care – IV’s for re-hydration, nutrients, and meds to stop the nausea – and by the end of that first day, I was able to sit up and eat a small bit of soup. By the fifth day, I was strong enough and stable enough to go back home. Before leaving, one of the doctors told me it was good that I got there when I did, because a few more days in that condition and I could have “just died.”

This is a clear example of how the false personality “hasn’t a clue” and yet, we still blindly listen to it and heed its advice. We need to continually re-remember that we need to listen inside, in the silence, to the voice of God and his divine will. We need to just “get out of the way” and let God drive the train. If we hitch our little rail car to his train we will automatically follow his lead along the track – and he knows where he’s going. I am living testament to the facts that life is good, God is great, and prayer is all-powerful.



## CCH BOOKSTORE

Food of Impressions



*Manifesting God*

by Father Thomas Keating

*Lessons in Truth* by Emilie Cady

*The Wisdom of Insecurity*

by Alan Watts

*Spiritual Economics* by Eric Butterworth

*Different Christianity* by Robin Amis

*In Search of the Miraculous*

by P. D. Ouspensky

*Lost Christianity* by Jacob Needleman

*The New Man* by Maurice Nicoll

*Life is Happening in the Only Way it Can*

by G. I. Gurdjieff

*The Work Life* by Beryl Pogson



Now in Stock:

Meditation Cushions

Zafus: Kapok and Buckwheat Filled

Zabutons: Durable 100% Cotton Twill



## The Liturgical Year and the Eucharist

The Liturgical Year focuses on the three great theological ideas that form the heart of Christian revelation: divine light experienced as wisdom, divine life experienced as empowerment, and divine love experienced as transformation. Jesus' personal experience of God as Abba is the heart of the mystery that is being transmitted through the liturgy. The whole panorama of the mysteries of Jesus' life is condensed in a single Eucharistic celebration.

*Food for Christ continued from page 3*

the pace and quality of the thoughts in the mind. Then, switch to an AM station that carries the divisive polemic of an angry political pundit. Notice again the experience in the belly, body and brain. Which impression makes you feel better? It doesn't take a genius to figure out that impressions are the major influence in our experience of life.

God sent Christ to heal the seeming divisions and to restore our Unity within and without. "In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ."

*(Galatians 3:28 The Message)*. Christ is the common Ground of our Being and we meet him by going deeper than our inherited impressions of division. Like a continent of the Earth that remains undivided even though human consciousness impresses it with countries and counties and fences, Christ is forever without division. He waits deep within each of us to be fed the food of silent impressions that call him forth into open expression.

We are God's people who, though we live in the world, do not need to be of it. Daily spiritual study and twice-daily Centering Prayer is real food for Life in Christ, our hope of glory.

## FEBRUARY Calendar

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

### Special Events

**2-Day Centering Prayer Retreat**  
Feb 12-13

**Lessons In Truth**  
Feb 15-May 3 Wednesdays 7:30pm  
This special class presents a foundation of many of the principles that are taught at CCH. Completion of this class, which is taught once a year, is a requirement for membership in the Church.

**Godly Play Team Planning Meeting**  
Feb 19 12noon  
in the Fellowship Hall

### Monthly

**Community Workday**  
Feb 11 9am-12noon

### Weekly

**Centering Prayer Group**  
Mondays 7:30-9pm  
Wednesdays 7:30-9pm

**Tuesday Enrichment** 7:30-8:30pm  
Sacred Chanting Feb 7  
Gurdjieff Music Feb 21

**Prayer Circle**  
Wednesdays 9:15am

**Contemplative Lunch**  
Wednesdays 12noon-1pm

**Mid-Week Communion Service**  
Wednesdays 6-7pm

**Lessons In Truth**  
Wednesdays 7:30pm

**Yoga**  
Thursdays 6-7pm

**Intro to The Work Class**  
Thursdays 7:30-9pm

### Daily

**Daily Centering Prayer Service**  
M-F 7-7:35am

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# Taking In Life-Giving Food

by Barbara Cook

If you've ever done a "newsfast," (and everyone should try it!) where you stopped watching or listening to the news for a while, then you have experienced the jarring amount of negativity and the very low emotional vibration produced when you return to consuming the news. When Father Carl Arico was recently here, presenting his useful and dynamic workshop on Spiritual Discernment, he contrasted the energy of "the news" with that of God as a vibration of finer energy. He graphically demonstrated the concept by vibrating his upraised hands as he stood in front of us. It was easy to get his point.

We need to slow down and open up in order to receive those finer impressions. We simply can't notice them in our usual, busy state of consciousness. That slowing down comes in time through our relationship with God. When we slow down, we become similar to television receivers that catch the waves of the broadcast that are flowing through the room. The waves are always flowing, but

without a receiver there is nothing to pick them up and reveal their vibrational presence.

Centering Prayer is a relationship with God that is developed and cultivated as a discipline. Just like the TV set makes a relationship with the broadcast signal, Centering Prayer provides relationship with God. You have to turn the TV on to get a picture and you need silence to hear God. God is always in the room. In fact, he is in our deepest selves. But if we don't have the right receiver - an intention to slow down, tune in and open to the finer impressions of the Divine Presence in prayer - we probably won't have access to that Presence even though it is in the room, even closer to us than our own selves.

As we expose ourselves to those finer impressions in prayer and act on them in faith, those impressions begin to transform us. Over time they quicken our vibrational level and make us ever more fine; just as taking in gross or negative impressions will make

us more gross. I know that from experience I have observed myself get identified with the news, go negative and get fearful or grouchy. The contrast between that and how I feel after resting in the silence clearly reveals the effect that impressions have on our being.

Let us be certain to make wise and informed choices about the daily impressions we take in - let us be sure that they are life supporting. In the silence we take in the very finest, most life-giving and renewing impressions of all - the constant loving vibrations of God. Commit to it and see for yourself what happens when you pick up those fine, subtle, but freely given impressions of the Divine Presence.

## Lessons In Truth

Wednesdays @ 7:30pm

Feb 15-May3

This special class presents a foundation of many of the principles that are taught at CCH. Completion of this class, which is taught once a year, is a requirement for membership in the Church.