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# THE MARK

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



The Church of Conscious Harmony  
A Contemplative Christian Community

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# Purity of Heart Is Identity with God

by Tim Cook

The power of clever advertising jingles and messages to make lasting impressions is legendary. One that is indelibly imprinted on my mind was in use for most of the last century in print, radio and TV ads that saturated the American cultural consciousness with a powerful idea of what purity is. Ivory soap ads were filled with images of clean-cut, immaculate looking women, and it was touted as being 99 and 44/100 percent pure - so pure it floats. Now I really don't have to know the resumes of the models, or the physics and chemistry of such purity, to get the message. That stuff must be really pure.

So, of course, the impression of purity suggested by those soap ads comes right up whenever I consider the Beatitudes from Jesus' beautiful Sermon on the Mount and come to, *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God* (Matthew 5:8). From the time I was a kid in Vacation Bible School, it was clear to me that if that is the kind of purity it takes to see God then there was absolutely no chance for me to see Him. I've now done too

much living to float, and I doubt that I could even come near to a 50/50 ratio on that purity scale.

But age and experience have shown me that our behaviors are just the surface of our lives and there is far more to us and our relationship with God than our actions. God is not a "guy in the sky," the "man upstairs," a cop, a judge, or a scorekeeper of my sins who I need to placate or hide from. God is Love, Spirit, all-pervading and everywhere present. Our true identity is Spirit. Since we are expressing our lives and experiencing ourselves through thought and physical action we, as a species, have become confused. Forgetting our spiritual nature we've become identified solely with our physical aspect and have lost touch with the infinite reality of Divine Love, which unifies and makes whole both our physical and spiritual natures in a new, reborn feeling of being. This error of self-concept and its consequent focus on behavior instead of identity has left us miserable and fruitlessly looking for happiness in the material world, the domain of

the senses, where it can never be found.

The word "blessed," as Jesus uses it in the Beatitudes, means simply happiness. He is giving us the clue to living truly happy lives. This happiness, however, is spiritual and so requires us to raise our attention beyond the physical domain where we could never "see" anything spiritual. The purity He is referring to is a purity of our affection, the degree of our desire for union with God who waits silently within us. Our purity is more clearly revealed by where we are habitually placing our attention than by what we do: *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* (Matthew 6:21).

Jesus goes on to explain that none of us can serve two masters. We can serve God, the interior Spirit, or we can serve the outer, sensory, physical world. We'll always prefer one over the other and make it the primary focus of our attention, our affection. There is no doubt about the direction of Jesus' guidance for us. He is absolutely and utterly clear in telling us not to concern ourselves about

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our material well-being. We are to seek the interior Kingdom of Heaven first, and everything else will be taken care of.

The purity, then, that leads to seeing God, is actually a matter of identity; of who or what we conceive ourselves to be. Are we creatures of the world, separate and on our own? Or do we truly belong to God, The One who lives in and as all Creation? Does our heart belong to that which lives us or to the world we see with our senses? The entire spiritual journey is a movement of identity, the feeling of “I” from the exterior to the interior of our lives. By degrees He leads us home, deeper and deeper into His presence within us. Our part is to see the good in this gifting journey, to wish for it’s fulfillment with all our hearts and to cooperate with the process through the graceful disciplines of daily spiritual practice and application of the tools of the Work in the ordinary moments of life.

Let’s be clear that the efforts we make are empowered by God. This is not a self-improvement program and we can’t do it by ourselves. The help we need to discover the purity of our identity with God is always present and available but we can only access it through our own attention; through calling out for Divine

assistance and trusting God to answer in His own time and in His own way.

One of the most profound utterances for God’s renewing help came from David in his 51st Psalm. It has graced countless journeyers for countless generations. You can pray it from your heart as you are reading this, as I am praying it from mine as I am copying it.

And please remember as you pray it that the word “sin” is not accusing us of being bad. It is simply describing the state I’ve just described above; of living in a state of separation from the Reality of God and the resultant acts that proceed from our ignorance of Truth. All of this is forgiven through Christ. We simply accept it as we pray for God’s merciful assistance in creating the New Jerusalem in our personal consciousness.

*Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions. Wash  
me thoroughly from my iniquity, and  
cleanse me from my sin.*

*For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I  
sinned, and done what is evil in your  
sight, so that you are justified in your  
sentence and blameless when you*

*pass judgment. Indeed, I was born  
guilty, a sinner when my mother  
conceived me. You desire truth in the  
inward being; therefore teach me  
wisdom in my secret heart.*

*Purge me with hyssop, and I  
shall be clean; wash me, and I shall  
be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy  
and gladness; let the bones that you  
have crushed rejoice. Hide your face  
from my sins, and blot out all my  
iniquities.*

***Create in me a clean  
heart, O God, and put a new  
and right spirit within me. Do  
not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from  
me. Restore to me the joy of your  
salvation, and sustain in me a willing  
spirit.***

*Then I will teach transgressors  
your ways, and sinners will return to  
you. Deliver me from bloodshed, O  
God, O God of my salvation, and  
my tongue will sing aloud of your  
deliverance. O Lord, open my lips,  
and my mouth will declare your  
praise. For you have no delight in  
sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt  
offering, you would not be pleased. The  
sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken  
spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O  
God, you will not despise.*

*Do good to Zion in your good  
pleasure; rebuild the walls of  
Jerusalem, then you will delight in  
right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and  
whole burnt offerings; then bulls will  
be offered on your altar. ☉*

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# Blessed Are the Pure of Heart, They Will See God

by Barbara Cook

Whenever I think of this Beatitude my heart leaps. As a longtime practioner of Centering Prayer, I know that if we persist in this daily prayer with a desire for God, it will bear the fruit of purifying our false self and its emotional programs for happiness ...so that we will see God. That is the contemplative life. I wish that for everyone.

As many of you know, last month Tim and I went to St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado. We attended a 14-day Advanced Studies Course with Fr. Thomas Keating. Fr. Thomas invited 20 people who have been practicing Centering Prayer for twenty or so years and who are active in service to the prayer. He wanted to share his wisdom and understanding with those who were developing their relationship with God through the prayer, retreats, and service. He said, "If the prayer is to do its possible work in the world, it will be because of you." And of course, that means you, too. It needs all of us. Although he didn't present much new material, there was a great deepening and clarification of what he has previously shared. It was a profound experience for all of us. I took copious notes and I

hope to share as much of it as I can with whoever wants to hear or be refreshed.

Regarding purification, he referred to Matthew 6:6: *When you wish to pray, go into your inner room and pray to your Father in secret and your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.* What happens in the inner room? Fr. Thomas said two things happen:

1. God affirms your basic core of goodness.

2. He heals the wounds of a lifetime, by lovingly dismantling the false self system we designed in childhood to make up for what we perceived was lacking, and it's programs for happiness which haven't worked yet and can't possibly work

If we consent to His project all that is left when He finishes is God, Himself, our basic core of goodness, light, life, and love. But now we can be minus the false self which made us so central in our small melodrama and obscured the omnipresent reality, God.

What is left, as St. Paul put it: *Christ in you, your hope of glory.* Gold purified of the dross.

We live in this amazing time when anyone who wishes to may devote their life to this Life-giving possibility that we can be transformed, even while living in

this world. By simply participating in Centering Prayer, this simple method of opening to the presence of God and His healing grace, our lives can be changed forever. If we connect to God's love and its healing physiological therapy, our hearts can be purified and we will see God everywhere and in everyone. May it be so. ☸

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## CCH Bookstore

### Community Reading

*Sabbath*

By Wayne Muller

July 16<sup>th</sup>-August 24<sup>th</sup>

### Blessed Are the Pure of Heart

*The Love that Keeps us Sane*

By Marc Foley, O.C.D.

*Care of the Soul*

By Thomas Moore

*Love Without Conditions*

By Paul Ferrini

*St. Therese of Lisieux*

By Fr. Thomas Keating

*The Sacred Art of Loving Kindness*

By Rabbi Rami Shapiro

*Mother Teresa Wisdom Deck*

*Meditation Timers*





# The Heart of the Matter is the Matter of the Heart

by Alicia Genung

*“A pure heart is a gift from God, and it comes by a new birth, by a new creation, and by the Spirit living in us.” (Bible.org. pg.1064)*

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My earliest memory of having a pure heart was around the age of three while playing underneath a very large willow tree in the back yard of my Grandmother's home in upstate New York. My siblings and I would play for entire afternoons under that old willow, making rooms out of the weeping branches that would tickle us as we ran through them. We didn't even mind the insects. Jesus tells us that this experience of a child's pure heart knows the Kingdom of Heaven and sees the face of God in everything. Looking back and really feeling into that precious memory, I see that there was no division and no separation from His great Love. Life was lived simply. We laughed a lot.

In *Season's of the Heart*, Macrina Wiederkehr describes the pure of heart as simplicity.

“It feels like a child exploring a new day. It feels like having eyes

that do nothing but see and all things are possible for those who can see. To be pure of heart is to be transparent, that is to have a heart that doesn't hide, an undivided single heart, a heart that feasts on the one thing necessary: life in and of God. To be pure of heart is to have a heart with direction, expectation and purpose.

*It is to seek first the reign of god, believing all else will be given it besides.* (Matt. 6:33)

*To be pure of heart is to be free.* (pg. 103)

Another memory of having a pure heart takes me 37 years later when my father became terminally ill with cancer. He became very angry in the dying process and would not speak to me...for about three years. The first two years I did not give it much attention but then the urgency came to me to find peace with him, and with myself. My job took me

to the small town in which he lived, about one hour away. And so I found myself stopping by to see and hopefully talk with him. But only the same result each time. I'd knock on the door and no one came to open it. After many prayers and self-observations, one day, when I least expected it, yet open to whatever happened, my father opened the door. I quietly went inside and sat on the floor below him. For the first time, I had no thing to say.

My father proceeded to tell me just how he saw me: Arrogant, cocky, self-righteous, vain and pride-filled were the fragments he helped me see. I remember asking for help in that moment and one of the tools of the Work fell on me. It was Sly Man and I held on. With each piece of truth, I rolled the pill and then swallowed. It was whom my father had come to know. My God knowing the purity

*continued on page 6*

in my heart opened the door that day because my pure heart was ready to hear how I had hurt another. I remember that there was no division in that visit. My motive and expectations were clean. All was happening perfectly for my growth and the purification of my emotional center. I saw the face of God in my father and knew how much he must have loved me in order to feel safe enough to express his feelings. *Know the Truth and the Truth will set you free.* (John 8:32) is a gospel passage that has great meaning for me. I did not laugh that day, but I sure felt free.

*This new feeling of a pure heart showed me that there is division in my heart most of my waking day. I have come to know, feel, and taste the many unclean aspects of my false personality like pride, self-pity, fear, envy, vanity and killing people in my mind. I am certainly not loving my neighbor or myself. Unclean is something I knew and moral bankruptcy is what brought me to a deep wish to find out in myself what it was I was living for. So I turned in the opposite direction and learned: "The Work is a very strong clean thing, and so demands a great deal of inner cleanness and strength and sincerity with oneself. Who are unclean in the Gospels? Every form of hypocrisy and*

*pretence, every form of looking down one's nose, every form of sighing slightly, every form of pseudo patience—yes, all this is uncleanness and we come to know it." (Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, pg. 551)*

So, what are we living for? This question comes to those who dedicate their lives to God. Our church stands on two legs: The Teaching of G.I.Gurdjieff, known as The Work, and the teachings of our Abba, Father Thomas Keating and the great works of Contemplative Prayer. Both legs teach us about emotional purification. The Work's primary purpose is purification of the emotional center. With Contemplative Prayer, practice and gospel teachings we can experience "purity of heart." We must have both to become fully transformed and our incarnation of Christ depends on them.

A man rich in personality and having magnetic center can be called to The Work. The purity of heart is not absent but passive. Division comes when the false personality becomes active and essence becomes passive. By loving what it hates, we surrender and submit to higher authority and

come under His will for us. The circle of our lives must be completed and our false personality must grow before we can return to essence. In our essence we are the "pure of heart." In our essence, we can experience again a re-found purity of heart as children of God. In *The New Man*, [reprint 1986], Maurice Nicoll describes this Beatitude like this: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

*To be pure in heart means literally to be purged in heart or cleansed by purgation. It is first about not being a hypocrite. It is about the inner and outer in a man corresponding. It is about an emotional state that can be reached in which the reality of the existence of God is seen directly from the clear-sightedness of the purified emotional understanding, for we understand not only with the mind. The emotional side of a man, when it is filled with self-emotions, and so with bad or evil feeling against those who do not admire him, or with self-pity, with hatred and revenge and so on, is obscured, is in darkness, and cannot fulfill its rightful function of mirroring the higher level. When cleansed, the heart sees – that is, understands – the existence of the higher level, of God, of the reality of the teaching*

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of Christ. (pg. 100)

*Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they shall see God. (Matthew  
5:8)*


This seems to me what I am living for, to live my every waking moment in such a way that I see God, everywhere. Happy am I when my heart is pure! This Beatitude is the most central and most significant of all the Beatitudes mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. We cannot mourn the things that displease God without having a pure heart. We cannot be meek, we cannot hunger and thirst for righteousness, we cannot be merciful, we cannot be a peacemaker or be prepared to stand persecution in the name of Christ without having a pure heart. This is one of the most central principles of the Christian life that we read about in the Bible. And it is so significant that Maurice Nicoll gives it the very last page of the 5<sup>th</sup> volume in *The Psychological Commentaries*. Nicoll states:

*Although they kill in their hearts, they may seem virtuous, full of merit. But in the next world, as many mystics and philosophers have said, you are judged by what your heart is like, apart from what the restraints of law, society, fear of reputation, have made you appear to be externally. We are judged by*

*the internal state and are sent to the place to which we thereby belong.*

It's now 12 years after my father's death and my mother is getting ready for her transition. In my recent visit to see her, a past memory came to me in my intellectual center, the feeling of a clean and open heart, and observing my breath prepared me to meet my mother in whatever state she would be in. As I walked into her room, I knelt down, and as close as nose to nose my mother held my face in her hands like with a small child. I felt His great love as we gazed at each other for what seemed to be a long time. I was so happy to have that kind of moment with her one more time. There it was again, a being experiencing a pure heart. This time it came from both inside and out. *You are happy when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see the Face of God in the outside world.* (Peterson, *The Message*, Ed. 1993, pg. 16)

...AND looking at me was the face of God in my beautifully aged mother.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting* [Psalm 139, 23-24] 

## August Calendar

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

### Special Events

#### One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat

Aug 18 8:30am - 4:00pm  
\$15. No need to pre-register.  
Bring a brown bag lunch.

### Monthly

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

Sacred Chanting Aug 7  
Gurdjieff Music Aug 21

#### Community Workday

Aug 11 9am-12noon

### Weekly

#### Centering Prayer Group

Mondays 7:30-9pm

#### Prayer Circle

Wednesdays 9:15am

#### Contemplative Knitting Circle

Wednesdays 10:30am-12noon  
All levels of experience are welcome to knit items to send to Pine Ridge in the fall.

#### Contemplative Lunch

Wednesdays 12noon-1pm

#### Mid-Week Communion Service

Wednesdays 6-7pm

#### Fr. Keating Spiritual Journey Video Series

Wednesdays 7:30pm

### Daily

#### Daily Centering Prayer Service

M-F 7-7:35am



## The Transfiguration

*Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up a mountain to pray. They did not take themselves. In contemplative prayer we may have the sense of being carried or led by the hand, or even of being thrust into this experience. The mountain represents a place apart, freedom from the cares and preoccupations of the plain, which represents everyday life. In coming into a retreat atmosphere, we, too are in a place apart. It may be that God has waited a long time to get us into a particular location, time, and company ... We might have received the same grace in other situations. But God often chooses circumstances that are just right to impress upon us a special grace.*

Having been reassured by Jesus, the disciples descended the mountain and returned to everyday life, bringing with them the contemplative perspective. Once the divine presence has been established as part of their ordinary reality, they perceive the divine person in Jesus and find God in everything. In similar fashion, contemplative prayer awakens us to the consciousness of Christ within us and to His personal experience of Ultimate Reality as Abba,

the God of infinite  
compassion,  
concern,  
and caring  
for every living thing.  
Thomas Keating, *Reawakenings*



Alleluia! Alleluia!



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