



# THE MARK

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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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# Today It Is Fulfilled

by Tim Cook

***“The Spirit of the Lord is on me”***... all eyes were riveted on the simple and seemingly ordinary man that stood before the assembly in the synagogue at Nazareth reading the words of the prophet Isaiah ... ***“because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor”*** ...they had known Him since He was a child, but now he seemed inexplicably different, as He continued ... ***“He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind”*** ... He read on with bold certitude as they wondered about the unusual presence they were feeling ... ***“to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*** They sat there in the silence of heightened expectation as He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant and returned to His seat. Then He dropped the bombshell: ***“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*** Travelers passing through Galilee had been carrying rumors about Him and the amazing teaching He’d been giving, but His presence was simply astonishing to them. This was Joseph the carpenter’s son, talking like He was an authority. But it was simply too much to bear when He continued by calling himself a prophet and telling them

that they couldn’t recognize Him because they couldn’t see past His ordinary, familiar appearance. ***“I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his hometown.”*** His seeming arrogance made them want to kill Him.

But it was too late. His baptism in the Jordan more than a month before had changed Him. The Holy Spirit had entered Him and that entry had revealed His Divine Sonship. Of course those who knew Him were shocked. The simple Jesus they had known was now manifesting the Christ, the Messiah, they’d all been waiting for. The change they were noticing, though, was not destined to remain limited to the now, unfamiliar person of Jesus. It was a change that was to involve the entire human race and was, in fact, a new beginning for the whole of humanity.

God’s progressive self-revelation to His human creatures had now manifested the staggering extent and reality of His perfect Oneness. Now He was revealed as not only the transcendent Creator who ruled through law, not only the immanent Presence who spoke through the prophets, but as the ever-creative, ever-self giving, ever-loving personal presence of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy

Spirit. The astonishing unity of our quantum universe, that is only now being discovered and described by contemporary scientists, manifested itself in person, that day, in that little synagogue in Nazareth. Human life was forever changed.

Isaiah had seen it coming. In Jesus it became obvious fact. God is One and his utter and total unity extends to and includes every particular human person. The infinite and the finite are actually Father and Son eternally joined in Love by the circular, perpetual givingness of the Holy Spirit. But what does that mean to us? The Good News for us is that what has been shown true in one person is true of all people. Like our Father, God, we are one. The entire human family is one and what has happened to one of us has happened to all of us.

As the human nature of the visible Jesus bore the inner, invisible Christ into His familiar surroundings, the Holy Spirit moved through Him to work liberating miracles in the lives of those who could dare to believe. Christ’s resurrected presence is now eternally available to those of us who can believe and understand that He is personally present within us right now...and that we are each cells in His Mystical Body, each constantly

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guided by His Holy Spirit who tells us everything we need to know.

As we dare to accept this personal invitation to participate in the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven to earth, we too may hear internal voices accusing us of arrogance or even blasphemy, like the voices raised against Jesus in the synagogue. Old mental habits and cultural associations, based on beliefs of separation from God, don't easily give way to the Reality that can't be seen by outer, sensory eyes. Our poor soul's imprisonment in the false-self identity is based on blindness to the Truth of God's personal love for each of us and His all-embracing Presence.

In the resurrected life He gives us we are made new. We may not even recognize ourselves at first. But the hometown crowd of our old, sense-based, false-self identity has no power over the Risen Christ within us. He is our very life, eternal Life. They couldn't kill Him then and they can't kill Him now. As we meet Him daily in our Centering Prayer, we learn to listen deeply and to hear His profound silent voice. And we know that today this scripture is being fulfilled in our hearing. Through Christ, we as a community of true believers are participating in an eternal year of the Lord's favor. ☉



## LENT

Our life is a mysterious interpenetration of material experience, spiritual reality and the divine presence. The key to being fully a Christian is to know Jesus Christ with the whole of our being ... and to know Jesus Christ in the whole of His being.

We must know Christ, first of all, in His sacred humanity and historical reality, and, more precisely, in His passion, which was the culminating point of His life on earth.

The essential note of His passion is the emptying of His divinity. Our Baptism is a commitment to participate in His death and resurrection. The death of what? We enter into His emptying by accepting the emptying process in our own life, by the death of the false self, and by living in the presence of God, the source of our being. The first stage of the spiritual journey is often rocky because the energy of the divine ground is not controllable. We have to accept it on its own terms as God begins to tear down the old tenement (the false self) brick by brick. This is the project that is being celebrated during Lent.

Hence, Lent can be painful and filled with temptation.

Thomas Keating, cf *The Heart of The World, Reawakenings*



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# Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind

by Barbara Cook

Humanity has been called by the Gospel to be transformed. Here at the Church of Conscious Harmony we accept the truth of His offering. Jesus Christ invited everyone to participate in the regeneration, and this community was founded on that call. We aim to offer ourselves to God's plan to transform the entire human race from worldly beings into sons and daughters of the most high. We were given Centering Prayer, lectio divina and the Work to use as tools for our active participation in the dismantling of our false selves. That was twenty years ago and I believe that it is only recently that we have begun to actually taste what a Christian Contemplative Community is.

As Fr. Thomas Keating tells us, this is not a magic carpet ride to bliss or a quick fix, but rather a lifelong relationship with the Father. That, of course, means that it is all on His terms. Father knows best and we are His sheep or little children. Those of us who accept the offering can testify that we do have a deeper relationship with God, and although it is a long, sometimes tedious and boring journey, it is also a rich, rewarding, amazing, transforming and grace-filled life.

This journey, which goes geographically from the head to the

heart, can easily become an ego trip if one does not use the advice of wise elders. Fr. Keating advises us to keep our attention between two banks on the river of life to keep it focused in the most useful way. These banks are devotion and service. Devotion might be seen as faithful adherence to our regular practices that open us to God: Centering Prayer twice a day, reading scripture and other spiritual texts, and participating in God-centered community activities. Service to others and our community flows from our experience of the fullness of the fruits of the prayer and should first begin with those with whom we live, and then spreads out as God directs. This eventually becomes contemplative, selfless service.

As humans we have been called to be transformed, and through Christ we have been given the Way. Here at The Church of Conscious Harmony we have a focus and tools and direction. This call is not just for an elite few, but for everyone and anyone who is willing to consent and participate. What an opportunity we have been given. God has offered to transform us by the renewing of our minds; to die to the old self and be reborn in the Spirit. We can literally be the change that we want to see in the world—it is ours for the having. I pray we'll continue to say yes. ☸

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## CCH Bookstore

Centering Prayer for Children

*Journey to the Heart*

By Frank Jelenek

Prayers & Reflections

*Seasons of your Heart*

By Macrina Wiederkehr

*Living Time*

By Maurice Nicoll

*Simple Explanation of*

*Work Ideas*

By Maurice Nicoll

For everyday guidance

*For the Love of God*

By D.A. Carson

Many CD's of Spoken Word

From Tim & many authors

Open Monday-Friday

8:30-3:30pm

Sunday 9:00-10:00am

11:30-12:30pm



## The Second Line of Work

If we could always self-remember, we would not serve the pain-factory of Nature. “Man,” said Gurdjieff, “was born in a state of Self-Remembering. Being born among sleeping people, he fell asleep. This Work is to wake us up.”

Now, how do you *yourself* serve this pain-factory? By actual pain? Yes, of course. By any other kind of pain? Yes, by much subtler pain than animals can offer. Take all the psychological pain that arises from Imaginary ‘I’ and False Personality—by envies, jealousies and hatreds, by all the unhappinesses of not being properly recognized, of not receiving what you think you are owed, by depression at not being the success that you think you should be—and a thousand and one other forms of subtle, psychological pain. The Gospels speak of a peace passing all understanding. Have you got this inner peace? How can we have it, if our centre of gravity lies in imagination—in Imaginary ‘I’ and in False Personality, which are both composed of imagination?

...Now you are full of negative feelings. You hate everyone. That is, you are now a very satisfactory

worker in the pain-factory—which is used for other purposes than your own health or well-being. And yet, no doubt, you still are thinking that if you had another house, husband, wife, car—you would be really happy.

Now what is the cure the Work suggests in regard to Imaginary ‘I’? The Work says: “Imaginary ‘I’ must go.” The Work suggests that if you begin to use the first inner sense that can be developed called the power of self-observation, or Observing ‘I’, you will find that you have many different ‘I’s, all contradictory, and that you have no Real ‘I’ and so this Imaginary ‘I’ is not you at all. This is the first real step in the Work—to break up the imagination that you have one real, permanent ‘I’. This illusion the Work calls Imaginary ‘I’. To do this may take years—and I notice in some cases after many years, indeed, this illusion still holds in sway, with the result that nothing in Being can change very much. Now you cannot begin to work, in my view, *on False Personality*, until you begin to weaken the strength of that form of imagination called Imaginary ‘I’.

pages 1134-1135 Volume 3, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*.

## February Calendar

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

### Special Events

One Day Centering Prayer Retreat  
Feb 16 8:30am-4pm  
\$15, Bring a pot luck dish to share.

### Monthly

Tuesday Enrichment 7:30-8:30 pm  
Sacred Chanting Feb 5  
Gurdjieff Music Feb 19

Community Workday  
Sat Feb 9 9 am-noon

Song & Silence  
Sat Feb 23 10am - 3pm

### Weekly

Prayer Circle  
Wednesdays 9:15 am

Contemplative Knitting Circle  
Wednesdays 10:30 am-noon

Contemplative Lunch  
Wednesdays noon-1 pm

Mid-Week Communion Service  
Wednesdays 6-7 pm

*Simple Explanation of Work Ideas*  
Wednesdays 7:30-9 pm

*Living Time* by Maurice Nicoll  
taught by Tim Cook  
Thursdays 7:30-9 pm

### Daily

Weekday Centering Prayer Service  
M-F 7-7:35 am  
Theosis Chapel



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## Comfort All Who Mourn by Edward Pierce

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to comfort all who mourn;... to give them the oil of gladness in place of mourning, a glorious mantle instead of a listless spirit. ISAIAH 61:1,3*

Scott Peck wrote, “Life is difficult.” The Work says that life is a pain factory.

When I see the hurts, wounds and suffering in my life, and in the lives of my loved ones and on the faces of those I see each day, two responses arise. The first is resistance, and a desire to ease the pain: a glass of wine, a witty response, a walk in the woods, the touch of another, or even deeper understanding of the cause. All of these approaches calm the distress, but only for a short while. But they are only distractions, and the root of suffering is stored away to arise another time. My beliefs about my suffering are not changed by these calming influences.

The second response I notice is acceptance. When I accept the fact that life is difficult, the knot begins to untangle. This second response leads me to surrender, to bear the suffering of my own circumstances,

and the circumstances of others, with less resistance and with an intention to simply digest it all. Though I can do little outside myself for the suffering of this world, there is a great deal I can do within. My particular suffering changes when I experience it fully. When I feel the sadness, the anger, the fear and the loneliness, they are somehow met within me by tenderness and a genuine sense of loving acceptance. God must dwell within me! When I give myself intentionally to the suffering, new ways of seeing become available and light fills my heart and mind.

But when I sit on the sidelines, not making the choice to be present to my feelings, my attention is occupied with activities and distractions, and efforts to look good in the eyes of others. Lists of “shoulds” start growing and I feel guilt that I’m not doing enough, resentment that others aren’t doing

enough, or frustration that *doing* doesn’t seem to help at all. Before long, there’s a sedimentary buildup of unfulfilled expectations and feelings that are being avoided rather than experienced. It takes such courage to halt this cyclic process of avoiding my own life, and the suffering of this human condition.

I’m grateful that twice a day I can practice putting it all down by resting in the arms of love and consenting to God’s presence and action within. This is the grace of Centering Prayer, that when I can’t seem to stop trying to “do” my life, I can open the door for God’s love to begin to live through me.

I’ve faced two life events that have brought me what seemed like insurmountable pain, and yet the gifts of increased joy and love that resulted have taught me to welcome such transformational experiences.

Many years ago I suffered a back

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injury that caused my leg to go numb and I couldn't sit in a chair for more than a few minutes without tearful pain. I consulted many doctors, took many different treatments, and searched for some meaning to the weakening of my spine. For nearly a year, I worked standing or kneeling, with ice packs on the hour to try to heal myself. I changed my diet, exercised and lost excess fat, learned a great deal about available medications, and still could not overcome this pain. I finally consented to the surgery that I had been avoiding, and when I awoke I could stand, sit, and walk with no noticeable pain. With another month of therapy I was back to actively participating in sports. And, though I could occasionally feel a reminder of my former discomfort, the pain was transformed from disability to information. And, today as I write this, the twinge in my back says it's time to mind my posture, and exercise my abs.

These past two years I have been transforming my marriage into two happy lives. It's been a difficult and confusing path most of the time. The last thing I wanted was a divorce, yet I'm so grateful to Lyn for standing for love no matter what that looked like. Lyn and I have experienced the suffering that our programs for happiness wrought. And together we have made effort to dismantle those programs and discover what God's plan for our lives would become.

I let go of knowing how relationship and partnership should work. And, I'm still practicing letting go of assuming that I know the experience or motives of another. As a child, I developed radar to detect the feelings of my parents so I would have some early warning of what might be coming. As an adult, this child-crafted radar is still signaling dangers and false hopes which misguide me. One of the misguided beliefs I've held is that I am responsible for the survival of my relationships, and my plan is the right plan. I can see how this invites my partner to become a prisoner or slave and how violent this is, and how painful it can be for her. Somehow, during the past year, I've found enough love to truly wish for God's will in Lyn's life, and not my will. I may be on a path to do the same for my life, as well.

Facing painful circumstances requires more than self will. For me, it was only possible when held within a larger context as described by Fr. Thomas Keating in his *Guidelines for Christian Life* listed in *Open Mind, Open Heart*. The first three of Fr. Keating's principles hold me in place for transformation:

1) The fundamental goodness of human nature...is an essential element of Christian faith. This basic core of goodness is capable of unlimited development; indeed, of becoming transformed into Christ and deified.

2) Our basic core of goodness is our true Self.

3) God and our true Self are not separate.

Accepting these, I can begin to surrender my defenses and experience the pain and mourning I had been desperately trying to escape. And without these, I could not help but cling desperately to my defenses, distractions, and sleep aids (entertainment, chemicals, and even knowledge).

Now, here's the most precious good news. When I direct my full attention, within this crucible of God's love, to bring forth the fears, the wounds, and the mourning, my suffering fades to bliss. It is the most glorious grace I've ever known...to experience love in the face of loneliness, frustration, sadness, grief, or confusion. Surrounding these painful thoughts, emotions, memories, and future predictions with love transformed everything from unjust circumstances to a privilege of relationship. The center of what was "my" being shifted from "not I" to Christ dwelling within.

My gratitude is for this community of friends, for the generosity of our teachers, Tim, Barbara, Fr. Thomas, and especially the kindness of my family. May we serve one another this year in the transformation of our everyday lives to Incarnate Love. ☸

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## Guidelines for Christian Life, Growth and Transformation



The Church of Conscious Harmony  
A Contemplative Christian Community

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his seminal work *Open Mind, Open Heart*, lists 42 principles underlying the Christian spiritual journey. Fr. Keating asks that these principles be read according to the method of lectio divina. One principle will appear in these pages each month.

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2nd Guideline:

*Our basic core of goodness is our true Self.  
Its center of gravity is God.  
The acceptance of our basic goodness  
is a quantum leap in the spiritual journey.*



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Tim and Barbara Cook

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## Contemplative Response Team Training March 30<sup>th</sup>, 12 – 4 pm

A training will be held on March 30<sup>th</sup> for those wishing to participate in an ongoing formation/discernment process to provide compassionate response to members of our community who express a psycho-spiritual or health-care need.

Topics regarding motivations for helping versus rescuing, listening skills, boundaries, and expressions of suffering will be explored. Role-playing and interactive teaching techniques will be used to give a realistic insight into the compassionate contemplative response.

There is no fee for the training, but it is recommended you purchase the *Contemplative Service* booklet published by Contemplative Outreach which will be available on site.

Register in the Office. For more information please contact:  
Bonita Griffith 512-261-3515