



THE MARK

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The Church of Conscious Harmony
A Contemplative Christian Community
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We Always Already Have Everything We Need

by Tim Cook

A few years ago I filled our bird feeder with some high-quality seed and hung it on a tree in the garden where we could easily see it from our dining room window. When I looked out a few hours later I was amazed to see birds of every sort on the feeder, while others waited their turn on the branches of the nearby trees and more on the ground picking up the spillover. There were cardinals and finches, blue jays, chickadees and several other species busily at work. I was interested to see that the mix of seeds that I had bought had something for virtually every species. I could see, for example, that the cardinals preferred the big sunflower seeds which the chickadees didn't go near. And the chickadees preferred the tiny grains of millet that were way too small for the beaks of the cardinals to hold onto to crack. Just then a woodpecker flew onto a tree nearby and began to hammer away to get the bugs that it knew were under the bark. At that moment a light went on in me as I saw that each bird had just the right beak to do the job that was assigned to it and to get the specific food that was *its* food and its alone. The cardinal's large shearing beak was perfectly designed to break open the

sunflower seeds that were its perfect food. It had no need of a small crunching beak because its food was not the millet. Nor did it have a sharp pointed beak to penetrate wood because its food was not bugs like a woodpecker. The chickadee's beak was likewise useless for penetrating wood because its perfect food was millet for which it was perfectly equipped. The woodpecker was not the slightest bit interested in the feeder because seeds were not on its menu at all and its sharp beak would have been useless even if it had attempted to crack them.

What I saw in a flash was that every creature in each part of creation is perfectly equipped to do the job for which it was created. If it doesn't have specific tools, it is because it doesn't need them. It has what it needs. If it doesn't have it, it doesn't need it. So I pondered, what does that mean for a human being? It certainly implies that just as we are we have everything we need to do what we are designed to do. No lack, no excess. That is the will and the design of our Creator.

With that idea in mind I considered many of the things I have tried unsuccessfully to do and wondered if I had just failed or if

I had been attempting things that were not mine to do at all and for which I had been therefore totally unequipped. It soon became clear that I had been frustrated in all of these things because I had been operating way outside my job description. For example, I looked back on a lifetime of attempting to discern what other people were thinking, or trying to know why people did or said the things they did or said. I saw the countless times I tried to predict what would happen next. I remembered the many times I had been young and in trouble and wondered how I was ever going to get out of the mess I was in. And, of course, there's the classic we've all faced many times, "Where am I going to get the money I need for this?" In all of this I was as silly as if I had been a cardinal, with a rounded shearing beak, trying to peck its way into the bark of a tree where no seeds are to be found. These things were not my job, so of course I could never accomplish them and none of us can. Our Creator has not given us these capacities because we do not need them.

We do, however, have everything we need to do what we were made for. And what we were made for is God. When we turn

our God-given attention to Him and when we use the will He gave us to accept the lives and conditions He has given us with a deeply felt acceptance, like Mary in the *Magnificat*, “Let it be done to me according to thy will,” then we are doing what we were designed for.

We were made for grace and yet our culturally derived human expectations are so far from that reality that it almost seems absurd and impossible to think that we could actually live that way. We are not truly living the life we were made for until we live in just the way that Jesus so clearly pointed to when he said,

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such

things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ~Luke 12: 19-32 NIV

I’ve never seen a more compelling invitation to enter this way of the life our Creator made us for than this short essay by Gordon Cosby:

There is a river, whose streams gladden the city of God ... Psalm 46:4

“The stream flowing through our lives is from eternity to eternity. It is artesian. It is totally adequate. Everything we need is borne by that stream. Its origin is the realm beyond, and it carries infinite resources. In this space-time realm, conditioned as we are, the stream can seem to be a trickle. It seems puny against the drugs we’re battling, against the divisions among us or the power of greed that fuels our economy.

“When we’re up against all the world’s needs and lacks—the way we perceive life—the stream seems inadequate. But in fact, it is a powerful, surging, cleansing tide that purifies all it touches. It is a grace torrent. It flows irrespective of merit. It carries everything that a human being has ever needed—and could ever want. Whatever we need will flow by at just the opportune moment. Our problem is that we’re not attuned to the stream. We don’t see it. We’re not

even looking in the river’s direction.

“But when we wait in expectancy, looking at the stream and then recognizing what we need as it floats by, we simply reach out and take the gift. It’s an effortless way of living. Usually we’re not attuned to effortlessness. We’re too busy striving. We’re holding forth and carrying on and trying to reach our goals. The wisdom of the stream is the opposite of this. What I’m talking about is moving from a conceptual awareness of God’s care - the idea of God’s providence - to trusting the flow of that stream that carries everything we need and will bring it at just the opportune moment...

“Jesus found it difficult to understand his disciples’ anxiety. He was so in the river, he was so aware that the stream carried everything that was needed, that he couldn’t understand why others were having so much trouble with the idea. What he says is to set our minds on God’s realm, God’s justice, before everything else. Everything else will be given by the stream. This is different from achievement and different from making things happen. Do not be anxious about tomorrow, Jesus says. You’ll have plenty to think about when tomorrow comes. Now the stream is flowing.

“Once we get accustomed to noticing the stream, and we spend more time near the stream, taking

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We Already Have... continued from page 3

from it what is being given, there comes another step: actually getting into the water and resting in its flow. Even when the flow is a torrent, we know we are safe. We trust the flow. We become non-resistant. We become receptive. We trust the power of the divine presence, which longs to take our one little life to its divine destination. Even if we're in deep water, we trust the flow and are not afraid. We simply wait in expectancy to round the next bend, looking in wonder at the view. Always a new view. Effortlessness, expectancy and wonder are how we live, rather than striving.

“Faith, in the biblical sense, is trusting the flow and reveling in the view and being carried beyond all existing boundaries. Faith is being excited about the final destination, even when the destination is mystery. When Jesus says, *Believe in God, believe also in me*, he is saying, ‘Get into the stream with us. It’s a stream of pure grace and mercy. Go into its depths and find us there.’”

Those depths are right here within us. They are waiting for us to drench ourselves in the experiential truth we meet everyday as we accept God’s gift of Himself in silent Centering Prayer.

We were made for this. ☉



The Grace of the Ascension

He told them, ‘You don’t get to know the time.

Timing is the Father’s business.

What you’ll get is the Holy Spirit.

And when the Holy Spirit comes on you,

you will be able to be my witnesses

... even to the ends of the world.’

These were His last words.

As they watched, He was taken up

and disappeared in a cloud.

The Acts of the Apostles 1: 7-9 [THE MESSAGE]

The cosmic Christ, revealed in the mystery of the Ascension, manifests our deep self and the inner nature of all reality. What is manifested is the living, vibrant Spirit, filling us and all things with boundless life and love. The Spirit is always present, yet always coming to us. That is because the divine actuality becomes present in a new way each time we move to a new level of spiritual awareness. The Spirit has been given; yet He is always waiting to be received so that He can give Himself again – and more completely.

Thomas Keating, *The Heart of the World*

‘I’ll be with you

... day after day after day,

right up to the end of the age.’

Matthew 28: 20 [THE MESSAGE]

Inside Out People

by Babara Cook

St. Paul proclaims that we are *right now* children of God, and if children of God, then heirs of God. Heirs of what? Heirs of all our Father's riches and glory. Whenever we turn our attention to God our Father, He treats us just like the father treats his son in Jesus' story of The Prodigal Son. He throws His arms around us and fully claims us even though we may still be a far way off. This is true for all people at all times. The mercy of God and His love is fully right here right now. But to move from spiritual infancy to full heir in manifestation is yet a long way off. Though at any time we may experience full Sonship, it takes time for us to fully accept and bear the full grace and capabilities of the heir. It takes healing from false-self identification and its effects in our lives. It takes staying in relationship with the Father through this entire process, or we might begin to wander again.

We may not even notice the joy of His sometimes subtle presence. It requires opening ourselves to the love and generosity of His Presence so we can identify with our true selves. We are His children now, but children who have thrown

away our real identity to assume a self centered and false identity, where we have observed everything in creation as if it were there solely for us, to make us safe or satisfied.

We tend to look to the outer world for fulfillment, for the satisfaction that can only come from within. If we are to develop a stable identity as sons and daughters of God we must turn within, to the center of our being, and let go of our obsessive habit of looking outside for our good. We must learn to recognize that in our Father's house we already have everything.

As we practice letting go and opening to our true identity in the center, we become real from the inside out and truly grounded in God. As our prayer relationship helps us empty out the junk — the unprocessed emotional debris of a lifetime that fed our self centered identity — there is more room for the light, life and love that are our Father's glory. Then we look out on a world that is our Father's world and like our Father we bless it, we give to it instead of taking from it in fruitless attempts to fill the bottomless pit of the false self.

We are already His children, as is all mankind, but fully manifesting that relationship is a process that seems to take time. Yet, all the while we have our Father's protection, identity, and understanding and can humbly act from that though we might be yet a long way off; not fully solid. In the meantime we have our hope in the Father that is right now fully present, not in some future promise or wish, but in the right now present. He is as true and as rock solid now as He will be when the process is complete. Jesus said *Our Father*, and He meant right now.

We open to His truth and Presence and love and healing as we sit with Him in silence daily. We look to Jesus to show how a son of God acts and how He speaks. Nothing separates us from the truth except the thought that we are separate. And as Fr. Thomas says, we can just quit thinking that thought. Though we may seem to be a far way off, the Father and each of us are one right now. We can draw from His storehouse now, we can be loving now, we can let go of fear that comes from separative habits...right now. We can come under the Father's authority, as heirs, *right now*. ☉



Annual Aim - Mercy

May: Power by Lauri Raymond

I affirm... My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.

~ 2 Corinthians 12: 9

Not too long ago, I was telling some friends here at the church about a conversation I had initiated with my son. I shared how it had been hard to ask certain questions and say certain things. “Why was it hard?” a friend wanted to know. After replying that it was always hard for me to confront people and risk their anger, I wondered, “Why do you ask?” He shrugged, answering, “It just seems like an area where you’re not free.”

Gurdjieff said that in our normal state of consciousness we have as much freedom to move as a violin in a violin case. One of the key aphorisms of the Work is, “Man Cannot Do.” When I first encountered these ideas it was like a one/two punch. First, it made me angry and I didn’t believe it. Then, almost before I could catch my breath, I saw the truth of it written all over my life. Since then the spiritual journey has been a steady revelation of all the areas over which I have no control.

Despite my best efforts to hide it, pretty it up or change it, I am

powerless over this personality and all the negative emotions and addictions that go along with it. Some of the golden oldies include: desire to please, procrastination, self-justifying, vagueness, judging myself and others, numbing out in front of the TV, resentment, the need to be right, and feelings of worthlessness. There are many more.

I am powerless over the welfare, actions or attitudes of others. This is especially vexing to the aforementioned personality when the others happen to be “dearly beloveds:” my son, husband, sisters and brothers, mom, employees. They neither need nor appreciate my advice or worrying, no matter how artfully presented. I’ve also seen that governments and corporations are unmoved by kitchen ranting.

Here’s the biggie: I am powerless over the circumstances of my life. This is the one that I notice I really want to qualify; it’s the one over which it really *seems* like I have *some* power.

I mean, sure I have no control over acts of God, like the lightning bolt that fried the electricity inside our business. But *all* the circumstances? In popular culture, the belief that you can create your own success is a good thing. It’s the entrepreneurial spirit. It’s that all-American, can-do, rags-to-riches mentality. If I make it to the cover of *Inc. Magazine*, I’m a success! Conversely, if my company appears to be struggling (which it does) and I’m upside down in debt, I clearly did something wrong. I just need to work harder, be more creative, travel more, learn more, talk to the right people, do more demos, cut costs, downsize, pay myself less. Think more positively, for God’s sake.

And what about my body? Surely I have control over that. I mean, it’s *my* body, right? All the commercials and self-help books tell me so. If I’m overweight, I just need more self-discipline or the right pill. If I’m sick, I need to take my body into the shop, say more

affirmations or get the right pill.

But what if nothing I try seems to work?

During Lent, something happened to my back. One afternoon, I started feeling twinges and by the next morning, I was surrounded by a fog of intense pain. I was unable to move to the right or left; unable to sit or stand or even lie down without pain. Not normally a pill taker, I brazenly took three aspirin. Nothing. I called one of two friends who is an acupuncturist. While I experienced some relief on the table, the pain returned immediately. During the next few days, I slept little. My husband Tom drove me to three acupuncture treatments, two chiropractic treatments and my doctor's office. I took muscle relaxants, Motrin and homeopathic remedies. Tom rubbed my back with essential oils and Chinese liniment from the sympathetic Vietnamese lady at the dry cleaners. He applied little electric shocks to my spine (courtesy of a machine from one of the acupuncturists). I applied ice and later alternated ice with a heating pad. And while there would be small relief during the day, each morning the pain was back as bad as ever. I prayed and chanted. I whimpered.

In *Divine Therapy & Addiction*, Fr. Thomas Keating writes, "The real spiritual journey depends on our acknowledging the unmanageability of our lives." He

said it is through realizing our utter powerlessness, falling to our knees and turning our lives and our will over to God (steps 1, 2 and 3) that we open the door for transformation. I believe it was about four days into this pitiful event that I had the thought, "What if this never goes away?" I realized that I had been doing everything I could to control the situation ... to make it stop. Even my prayers had been treating God, as Fr. Keating muses, like my personal butler.

The moment you suffer, try to remember yourself. Involuntary suffering is of no value. Only conscious suffering is of value. George Gurdjieff

The thought that the pain might never go away was a useful shock. It made me remember that I can Work. I began observing my reflexive resistance to my current state of affairs. Instead of running from the pain, I began feeling deeply into it while breathing slowly. I thought of my Dad who experienced a lot of pain when he was alive and I remembered that at times I had been disbelieving and hard-hearted toward him. I thought of my brother Jay, who has chronic back pain, and then I thought of all the pain in all of the world. I "saw" Jesus on the cross – smiling at me — and had a powerful awareness that He was with me, bearing mine and everyone else's pain, whether we

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CCH Bookstore

Year of Mercy
May - Power

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Begins April 18th

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By Maurice Nicoll
With new Index



New Index also available separately

The New Man
By Maurice Nicoll



The Mark
By Maurice Nicoll



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knew it or not. There was no self-judgment in any of this. There was non-identification and self-remembering. I could feel God's love and mercy moving through me.

I am so grateful that I had that entire experience. I wouldn't have if any of my strategies to fix it had worked. Through surrender, through the realization of my utter inability to heal myself, I made space for God's Healing Energy to work in me. I was able to receive the gifts of human healers through whom God was working. The crushing pain was gone and there was regeneration on a higher energetic level.

It is not an accident that I recently spent eight weeks with friends pondering the Gospel of Luke. Again and again we remarked on the familiar foolishness of the Apostles. I saw myself in Peter who swore to Jesus that he would go with him to prison and even death, and was told, *I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know me.* When Peter heard the cock crow and realized that all Jesus had predicted had come to pass, "he went out and wept bitterly."

How many times a day do I deny the existence of God by thinking and acting as if I am utterly alone? What a grace it is

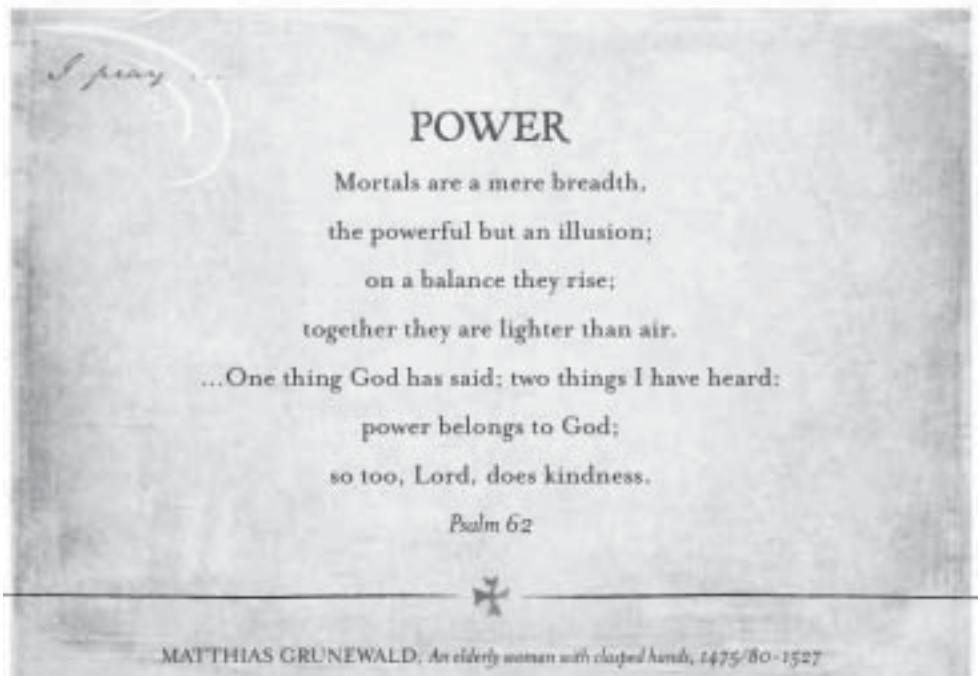
when I fall on my knees in the realization that I am powerless over my mechanical behavior. I have come to realize that these humiliations are God's mercy; they are the doorway through which I find the true source of Power.

I can see that God has placed us in a very unique womb at CCH, where we are nurtured and nourished by two profound gifts. As we consent to God's presence and action in daily Centering Prayer, we become aware of our place in the scale of things and of the tenderness, wisdom and impeccable timing of our Beloved Divine Therapist. As we make effort in the Work, as the personality becomes passive, we begin to participate in our own transformation into the realization

of our divine DNA.

I have learned that Jesus told us that we have the potential to create, to manifest, to heal, just as He did. I now know that life is safe with God as the center. We boldly engage with the life we are given, because we understand that no matter what external events look like, *All is Well.* We develop an attitude of openness, surrender, and radical trust, even if we can't see around the next bend.

I have begun to see all the ways that I haven't been free. Cracks are appearing in all my ancient walls — ancient beliefs — which have held me captive. And I Wish. Not for a bigger violin case, but to be perfectly in tune, ready for the Maestro to pick me up and play His heavenly music through me. ☸






The Work

You must sacrifice your suffering...

The Work does not seek to develop the love of self. On the contrary, it seeks to diminish it. It seeks to draw energy out of the self-love so that the freed energy can find a new direction. The action of the Work on a person is not to make him or her more proud and conceited or selfish or self-centered or negative. It is designed to have the reverse effect, provided a man *does* it. It is designed to make people feel more and more, in proportion to their powers of endurance and in different ways, and after different periods of time, a process of *depersonalization*, so that they no longer have the same feeling of who or what they are. This gradual withdrawal of energy from the customary narrow, easily resentful and brittle feeling of 'I' is accompanied by a gradual new and broader feeling of I – as if one were living in a large place. This gradual new and broader feeling of I is not centered in the love of self. It is not situated in the external division of the Emotional Centre. It is internal to the external division. It can hear, feel, value and understand the Work. In short, it

can do what the self-love cannot. This new feeling of I is highly desirable. It is like being introduced to a new civilization, to another form of life. But for a long time the old feeling of 'I' reasserts itself temporarily and seeks to resume its dominion. This is where it is possible to speak of temptation, in the esoteric meaning of temptation. If one ceases to keep the Work warm and viable in oneself, if one lets it get cold too long, punishment comes. It takes the form of a cessation of meaning, of a deadness inside. One is back in life. One starts complaining again, feeling old grievances, making accounts against others, and, in short, singing one's song. This is easy. It is mechanical. It is not Work. Of course, there is no one who is punishing you. We punish ourselves – by casting ourselves down to a lower level because we allow ourselves to fall asleep. The remedy is to begin to work again – seriously. For this, you must sacrifice your suffering. 

Pages 1637-1638, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, by Maurice Nicoll. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the *Introduction to the Work* classes held every Thursday at 7:30 pm at The Church of Conscious Harmony.



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SEEDS: The Laws of the Spirit

The shallow "I" of individualism can be possessed, developed, cultivated, and pandered to, satisfied: it is the center of all our strivings for gains and for satisfaction, whether material or spiritual. But the deep "I" of the spirit, of solitude and of love, cannot be "had," possessed, developed, perfected. It can only be and act according to the inner laws which are not of man's contriving but which come from God. They are the Laws of the Spirit who, like the wind, blows where He wills. This inner "I," who is always alone, is always universal: for in this most inmost "I" my own solitude meets the solitude of every other man and the solitude of God. Hence it is beyond division, beyond limitation, beyond selfish affirmation.

By Thomas Merton
Originally published in *Disputed Questions*, p. 207

Guidelines for Christian Life, Growth and Transformation

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.

28th Guideline

The goal of genuine spiritual practice is not the rejection of the good things of the body, mind, or spirit, but the right use of them.

No aspect of human nature or period of human life is to be rejected but integrated into each successive level of unfolding self-consciousness.

In this way, the partial goodness proper to each stage of human development is preserved and only its limitations are left behind.

The way to become divine is thus to become fully human.

May Calendar

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

Special Events

Song & Silence

May 8 10am-3pm

\$20, preregistration required

Lunch is provided.

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat

May 15 8:30am-4pm

\$15, no preregistration required

Bring your own lunch.

HYPED Youth Group Spaghetti Dinner

May 8 6PM \$5 Adult \$3 Children

Monthly

Tuesday Enrichment 7:30pm

May 4 Sacred Chanting

May 18 Gurdjieff Music

Community Workday

May 22 9am-12noon

Weekly

Prayer Circle

Wednesdays 9:15am

Contemplative Lunch

Wednesdays 12noon

Mid-Week Communion Service

Wednesdays 6-7pm

Introduction to the Work Class

Thursdays 7:30pm

Daily

Weekday Centering Prayer Service

M-F 7-7:35am in Theosis Chapel