



THE MARK

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A Contemplative Christian Community
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This Is Our True Work

by Tim Cook

As we completed our transaction, the young clerk in the supermarket informed me that his life was going to improve considerably in about an hour. When I asked him how that improvement was going to come about, he said he would be getting off work then, and his time would be his own.

Now, I am not unfamiliar with that sentiment. I have felt that way many times in my life and I knew just what he meant. But his attitude made me realize just how much we parcel out our lives into multiple segments that we then judge as worthy of happy or unhappy attitudes. When we think like that, we are leaving out the most important fact of life and one of the greatest benefits of being born a human being.

God, our creator, is One – an undivided whole who is present in and through all of His manifold, multiform, magnificent creation. His varied expressions, though, no matter how multiple, never actually disrupt the perfect unity of His indivisible being. The One remains one even while appearing as what the Tao Te Ching calls “the ten thousand things.” The reality of this unity could be illustrated on a smaller scale by looking at our planet. It has been divided up into sections that we refer to as

continents, nations, states, provinces, counties, cities and villages. However, Earth itself remains one indivisible whole.

We human beings, created in the image and likeness of God — who is One — are likewise one. We are born into one life, expressing the one love, manifesting as one human person. However, the developmental process of building a personality – which we require to participate creatively in cultural life – takes us through a complicated series of changes that ultimately leaves us, like my friend the supermarket clerk, experiencing our lives and feeling ourselves as fragmented, sectioned off and divided up, even though in reality we remain one in truth. Similarly, God is always One, though expressing as many; just as the earth always remains one earth, though it appears divided.

This experiential difference between our perceived fragmented separation and the truth of our actual indivisible, ontological unity is the human condition. These false premises are a sickness in our consciousness, for they are not our actual reality. It is this very illness that Christ, the Divine Physician, came into and continues to come into the human world to heal.

The word “healing” comes from the same root word that indicates wholeness and holiness. When we are healed, we are made whole. Only when we are whole can we experience the holiness of God’s indwelling presence. The source of all human difficulties is the erroneous sense of fragmentation of our oneness within ourselves and the feeling of separation from the Whole that is God. Christ restores us to the experience of wholeness, beyond our fragmented experience of self, and back into unity with God. That is how He heals us.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is criticized for working on the Sabbath, the day dedicated to acknowledgment and celebration of our human dependence on God and His love for us. He is accused of “working” when He heals a paralyzed man, making him whole. When told that He has no right to do such things on the Sabbath, Jesus responds: *My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.* The Father, God, has been creating and holding everything in existence together in Oneness. That is His “work.”

The Son, Christ, also “works.” His work is healing, restoring the experience of oneness to those who have lost it and have thereby become sick. Christ transforms and heals the

experience of those who have lost the wholeness, the holiness, that is our true identity – creations in the image and likeness of the Father, who cannot be anything other than one indivisible whole.

If we find ourselves groaning in interior agony, we need healing from the illusory feeling of separation and fragmentation. If we hunger to experience the wholeness we long for, then we must join in the healing work of the Father and the Son. They invite us to share in their creative unity and to find ourselves restored by learning to work with them. Our work, then, goes on constantly just as theirs does. It doesn't have anything to do with our occupations or, in fact, with anything we are doing or any place we happen to be. Our real work, our God-given work, goes on whether we

are on the job or at home or driving or playing or taking care of our families. Our work is to remember God and to feel our lives and ourselves in His utterly indivisible Oneness. Our work is made possible by the work of Christ, the Son whose mysterious presence is always with us, eternally asking us the critical question: *Do you want to be made whole?*

When we answer YES! our unity is restored and we are healed as we let go of our unconscious personal programs, and we immediately rise up within. A moment later we forget again, and lapse into the paralyzed feeling of fragmentation and separation. Again we hear Jesus, who is always working: *Do you want to be made whole?* And again we must answer

YES! – again and again and again. This is our true work. And we find, to our surprise, that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to stay at work until we have been completely and consciously permeated by the permanent experience of our unity with God, with all of Creation, and within ourselves. And when we share in God's work, we never have to wait to get off the job to find happiness.

The job skills required to do this work are made available to us through the graceful gifts of the Work of Inner Christianity and Centering Prayer. They are taught regularly at The Church of Conscious Harmony and their daily practice opens each of us to full participation in the fulltime work of God. ☸

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.

29th Guideline



The practice of a spiritual discipline is essential at the beginning of the spiritual journey as a means of developing the foundations of the contemplative dimension of life:

dedication and devotion to God and service to others.

Our daily practice should include a time for contemplative prayer and a program for letting go of the false self.

Let's Be Like Kittens

by Babara Cook

We just celebrated Easter and the astonishing truth that we and the whole of mankind have been redeemed by God through the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through Christ, we have been made sons and daughters of the Living God. Our personal participation in that redemption comes through our simple consent to His free gift.

In our contemporary generation we have been given a deceptively simple way to give our consent through the practice of Centering Prayer, as taught by Fr. Thomas Keating. It is simple; but that doesn't necessarily mean it is easy. The difficulties arise because the process of consenting to God means letting go of the false-self identity that has been growing in us since childhood. That mistaken identity is our adaptation to the world, a feeling of being separate that grows so familiar that it seems to be who and what we really are. As we consent to God's presence and action in our lives we gradually relax our hold on that false-self

Although the whole redemption has already been accomplished through Christ, our personal participation in that accomplishment requires our personal consent. We use our free

will to choose God and His gift of Sonship over continued allegiance to our personal, mechanical conditioning. The only real effort involved is to keep remembering that we have actually and literally been invited to share this feast of God's love. And the effort to open to the touch of His love in the silence, accepting that love into the deepest recesses of our unconscious and joining God accepting our whole lives there, faults and all. It also takes a little effort to trust and to be patient as God blooms us. But, altogether, that's really not all that much effort, considering the size of the gift.

When Mary Dwyer was here recently leading the Welcoming Prayer Retreat, she shared a helpful view of the process of the Spiritual Journey. During the first part of the journey we are like a baby monkey. It has to cling to its mother for all it is worth as the mom goes about her business, swinging through trees and

foraging. In the second half of the journey we are like kittens beside the road; we just sit there mewing and momma cat comes and picks us up by the scruff of the neck and carries us across the road. Much less effort.

Mother Theresa told her novice nuns to cleave to Christ, no matter what. That's what we learn to do. We cleave to Christ with all our might through our Centering Prayer periods and we cleave to Him in the scripture, the community, worship and retreats — just like a little monkey. We continue that way until our hope turns to experience and we feel Him carrying us, like the mother cat, I cannot transform myself but I can cleave to the One who has made it possible and say yes, believing He is who He said He is, and can do what He said He can do. May our small but needed efforts manifest in all the riches and glory God has in store for those who love Him, who cleave to Him and accept His grace. ☸

SEEDS: The End is Forgotten

The more one seeks "the good" outside oneself as something to be acquired, the more one is faced with the necessity of discussing, studying, understanding, analyzing the nature of the good. The more, therefore, one becomes involved in abstractions and in the confusion of divergent opinions. The more "the good" is objectively analyzed, the more it is treated as something to be attained by special virtuous techniques, the less real it becomes. As it becomes less real, it recedes further into the distance of abstraction, futurity, unattainability. The more, therefore, one concentrates on the means to be used to attain it. And as the end becomes more remote and more difficult, the means become more elaborate and complex, until finally the mere study of the means becomes so demanding that all one's effort must be concentrated on this, and the end is forgotten.

By Thomas Merton
Originally published in *The Way of Chuang Tzu*



Annual Aim - Service

Go and Do Likewise

by Mimi Conroy

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and

gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

My memories are filled with outstretched hands as family and friends have helped me through the challenges in my life. Looking back on the last eight years I see that it was a time of great growth...and a descent into the darkness. This night of the spirit would take me all the way down to the deepest, most insidious places of my memory, my psyche, and my false beliefs. And many of these challenging experiences were filled with a fellowship of the quality of saints, people I will never forget.

This time of purification happened while I lived out in the Hill Country in an 8'x32' travel trailer. The first outstretched hands came from three men from the church who gave a day to move my new home from a hilltop off Highway 71 to a

small space between the trees off Hamilton Pool Road. These men went above and beyond to gently move trees with wenches and back the trailer onto the only flat spot on the lot. With gentle stewardship and as little tree cutting as possible, six hours later I stood in my doorway looking out on the land I would live on for eight years.

My landscape company that had been a successful enterprise was no longer, and I was back at the church running the bookstore. I was wounded and in distress, brought back into the fold of this church for healing. Once again hands reached out to help with renovating my old travel trailer so I could comfortably live there. A friend spent many hours making it a dry and safe home for me.

The financial aspect of my business failure was taking everything I had. This was when my Jetta stopped on the side of the road to run no more. I remember the panic as I walked home; my life was coming completely undone. How much further could I be taken down?

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Living check to check, I owed thousands of dollars to the government and to vendors who were getting minimum payments at best. I got a ride to work the next day and had a car to drive within hours; another set of hands offered me the keys to a family car to use until I got a new one.

The people of this community were holding me up with love and understanding, giving me the space to fall safely in the company of friends. In the way of Christian growth and transformation I always have someone to lovingly look into my eyes and say, "You're right on schedule." Or, "We are here for you." There is always someone who really understands and is ready to work with me wherever I am, if I ask for that help.

I opened the bookstore one morning a few days after my car died and on my desk I saw an envelope with my name on it. I put my things down and opened it. In this envelope were ten one hundred dollar bills and a column from the used car section of *The Austin American-Statesman*. No note, just my name. I sat at my desk and wondered at the compassion and generosity of this community, but deep down I felt guilt; I still had so much Work to do to fully accept this gift. With this money and a loan from a friend I was able to buy a good, dependable car.

Each day I prayed to know God in some way as the desert of this long night had me parched for any experience of my benevolent Father. Months and years passed in

simplicity with nature all around me, both at home and at work. My attachments that once had value no longer interested me; something new was finding balance in me. One day I looked around the trailer and knew I was done, that I would soon be moving.

I write this piece from my beautiful new home that I moved into with a friend after getting out of the hospital last November. I left the hospital to convalesce in this home and never left.

I can now look back to the profound healing of these last years. I couldn't know at the time that God's purification process looked just like my life, during which I was developing faith and will and a capacity for perseverance. We never know bottom until we begin to get up and reach for help, help that often comes through outstretched hands from the ones we love, or sometimes even a stranger.

I have always thought hands were the most beautiful and telling parts of us. Hands are honest and are the tactile transmitters of our emotions, be they good or bad. I give thanks for the hands that have reached for me across time to place me here in a life that is far beyond any dream I could have dreamed.

Now it's my turn to be the hands that reach out to touch others in their times of distress or loneliness. Now it is my turn to pass along the money and love that was so freely passed to me during my time of transition, while I was learning that God is and always has been my source. ☸

CCH Bookstore

Year of Mercy

June-Service

Community Reading
Begins 6/13/2010

Job & The Mystery of Suffering
By Richard Rohr



Radical Hospitality
Fr. Daniel Homan



Having a Mary Spirit
By Joanna Weaver



More...

How Can I Help?

By Ram Dass

Stories and Reflections on Service

For peaceful, contemplative
browsing & study

Visit CCH Bookstore & Library

Open Monday-Friday

8:30am-3:30pm

Sunday 9:00-10:00am & 11:30am-12:30pm



PENTECOST

*On the last and great day of the feast,
Jesus stood and cried out: "If anyone is thirsty,
let that person come to me and drink.
The one who believes in me, as Scripture said,
'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"
John 7: 37-39*

Pentecost is the principal and crowning feast
of the theological idea of divine love.

It is, in fact, the crowning feast of the whole liturgical year.

The rest of the year examines the teaching and example of Jesus in the light of Pentecost,
that is, from the perspective of divine love . . . The Spirit is the ultimate promise of the Father . . .
a free gift. It is the Spirit who causes us to be one in the Body of Christ.

We have all received the same Spirit, enlivening us
and causing us to be in Christ, in the Father, in the Spirit.
We are in God and God is in us, and the unifying force is the Spirit.

To live in the Spirit is the fulfillment of every law and commandment,
the sum of every duty to each other, and the joy of oneness with everything that is.

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

*God the Holy Ghost
Who art light unto thine elect
Evermore enlighten us.
Thou who art fire of love
Evermore enkindle us.
Thou who art Lord and Giver of Life,
Evermore live in us.
Thou who bestowest sevenfold grace,
Evermore replenish us.
As the wind is thy symbol,
So forward our goings.
As the dove, so launch us heavenwards.
As water, so purify our spirits.
As a cloud, so abate our temptations.
As dew, so revive our languor.
As fire, so purge our dross.
Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)*



June Calendar

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

Special Events

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
June 19 8:30am-4pm
\$15, no preregistration required
Bring your own lunch.

Essence of Christian Mysticism
June 21-23 Mon-Wed 9am-3pm
A talk by Bernadette Roberts.
Pre-registration is required. \$75

Monthly

Tuesday Enrichment 7:30pm
June 1 Sacred Chanting
June 15 Gurdjieff Music

Community Workday
June 26 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



The Work

It is like dreaming that one is praying..


In the teaching of the Work the idea of *Prayer* and the idea of Self-Remembering are so closely connected that the one cannot be separated from the other. Without Self-Remembering, Prayer is impossible. Let us look at what this means. A man as he is cannot pray. That is, a man in his ordinary daily state cannot pray. In order to pray a man must be in a state of Self-Remembering. To pray as one is, in one's ordinary state, is to pray in a state of sleep, and to pray in a state of sleep is useless. Nothing can happen. Such Prayer cannot be answered, because it does not get anywhere.

...Four states of consciousness are possible, but ordinarily Man knows and lives in only two, and both are called in the Work *states of sleep*. The first state of consciousness or the lowest is that of bodily sleep, which is a passive state...in this state a man spends a third or even more of his life. The second state of consciousness is the state in which people spend the remaining part of their lives, in which they move their limbs and walk about and talk and also write

books and take part in politics and kill one another...in this so-called waking state a man is neither conscious of himself nor conscious of another. He lives and dies in darkness....

The third state of consciousness is Self-Remembering or Self-Consciousness or the state of Self-Awareness. It is usual to consider that we have this state already and are always aware of ourselves and that we act, think and feel with full consciousness of what we are doing...we cannot create it in ourselves by immediate desire alone, or decide that we will henceforth always live in a state of Self-Consciousness. But this third state constitutes the natural right of Man *as he is* and if Man does not possess it, it is because of the wrong conditions of his life. Today this state of consciousness occurs only in the form of rare flashes and it is only by long practice, by trial and error, that a man can begin to re-establish a state of Self-Remembering in himself.

...Now help only reaches to the third state of consciousness. It cannot reach down to the darkness

that people live their daily lives in and in which they are so often content to exist. Therefore to pray from the state of sleep – to pray from the so-called waking state – is like dreaming that one is praying, for in this second state of consciousness we are also dreaming and everything is unreal, only we do not notice that we are doing everything in a dream unless we experience a moment of consciousness belonging to the 3rd and 4th states of consciousness and see the contrast. So when a man prays he must remember himself. He must be conscious of himself and of what he is praying for. He must feel the meaning of everything he says and feel himself saying it. He must feel it is really 'I' in him that prays and not a set of frightened little 'I's or a set of mechanical 'I's formed by habit. And finally a man can neither pray nor remember himself unless he feels there is both a higher state of himself and something higher than he is. 

Pages 155-156, *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.