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THE MARK

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You Owe Me Nothing

by Tim Cook

Christianity offers us a profound, powerful and utterly mysterious way to personally participate in the experiences of the human condition from an entirely unique and seemingly paradoxical point of view. Experiences that on the surface seem to oppose our happiness can instead become doorways to grace and opportunities to bring the power of God's love into what may seem like a disaster.

One of the ideas that I learned from Bernadette Roberts has proven to be a powerful pattern to guide my understanding of how to meet challenging and difficult circumstances without becoming resentful, depressed or feeling oppressed. Bernadette puts it this way, "As it went for Jesus; so it goes for us on our spiritual journey." The events of Christ's life on this Earth provide an archetypal paradigm, a pattern by which we can see the process we go through as we are transformed into other Christs.

Another powerful idea came from my Work of Inner Christianity teacher, Ed Rabel, in these words, "Thank you. You owe me nothing. I owe you everything." He taught us to say those words silently and interiorly each time we felt hurt, wounded, wronged and/or betrayed.

In the course of our lives each of us will have countless experiences in which our will is opposed, things don't go our way, or we are surprised by unexpected changes in our circumstances that seem to be disadvantageous to our well-being. It is not a question of whether these kind of events will come to us or not; because they simply will come. The real question is rather how we will meet them. In what spirit will we meet the frustration of our plans and preferences. If we should be seduced into opposing opposition or resisting resistance, we will find nothing but sorrow. The way of Christ is not the world's way of doing things; it is the way Christ offers us to allow God's action to bring unexpected graces into our lives and it empowers us to live in spiritual freedom while participating in ordinary life in the world we meet every day.

Each of us is born into physical creation as a helpless infant. We don't know where we come from, we don't know why we are here, and we are unable to question any aspect of our existence. Everything just is. Typically none of us has memories of that helpless infancy; but as adults, looking at infants we can intuit that each of us developed in the very same way and went through

similar developmental conditioning. We had no control over our circumstances or our bodies. We had no issues. But we were absolutely insecure on our own. We needed help from everybody for everything. We had no capacity to do anything at all. We were just helpless little expressions of life.

As we entered into the experience of learning to be persons, we had to learn to take our part in the world and along the way each of us took on an illusory sense that we are a separate self. We were no longer just a bundle of life. Now we had a name and we could hang a lot of experiences onto that name as we identified ourselves with the way in which the world responds to us. Tim did or Tim didn't, Tim would or he wouldn't, Tim could or Tim couldn't. Tim is good or Tim is bad. In a similar way, in each of us, a personal, separative identity began to form and cover over that little ball of innocent life with which each of us began. Our parents, our friends, our teachers and our culture gradually participate in forming the personal identity that seems to be who we are. As this identity continues to form; it seems to each of us that we are our experiences.

Over time, bit by bit, as we gain a little control over our

bodies, we become potty trained, we learn to play games and increasingly participate in an ever larger experience of the world. In exchanges with our parents and our playmates, we learn to feel affection and esteem as we are loved, acknowledged, encouraged and praised. We acquire feelings of security as we find our place in society and learn to participate in the current cultural ideal. Eventually we become normal, ordinary citizens. The experiences and questions of childhood fade into the background as we look forward to what appears to be an endless future of infinite possibilities. We imagine all the things we are going to do and not going to do as we look forward to gaining more power and control, more affection and esteem, and more and more symbols of security. Of course, though we don't know it at the time; these expectations are unrealistic and they can never, in and of themselves, bring us the happiness we long for.

It seems to me that the cultural norms, the influences that shaped our acquired personalities, are themselves infantile. Babies are the center of their own tiny universes. When we were babies, we acted kind of like little Gods. We wanted more and more of everything. We wanted it all and we wanted it right now. If mommy didn't give it to us; if daddy denied us; then we had our little temper tantrums, pouted and

stormed off to our rooms to sulk. Every one of us tends to carry more subtle, but no less loveless and miserable, versions of those same infantile reactions into our adulthood until we are confronted by the healing love of God.

Fr. Thomas Keating's teaching makes it clear that if we are seeking happiness in the world through increasing degrees of power and control, security and survival or affection and esteem; we will inevitably be frustrated. In very truth, none of these are to be found in the world that we have been moving toward since infancy. The longing in our hearts for happiness and meaning is never satisfied by any conditions in the world that we've been steadily reaching for. And no matter how much we gain of culturally valued symbols of these deep needs; they never ultimate in a feeling of satisfaction. The deep longing for meaning and vague sense of incompleteness remain in us along with the deep knowledge that there must be something more.

If we are fortunate enough to embark on the spiritual journey we begin to feel disenchanting; not with life itself or the world but with the values that the world culture holds as ideals. The spiritual journey marks the beginning of the long road home; our return to innocence. This journey is a reversal of the process of our early conditioning by which we gained our capacity

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The Church of Conscious Harmony
A Contemplative Christian Community

7406 Newhall Lane
Austin, Texas 78746
512.347.9673
512.347.9675 fax
www.consciousharmony.org

MINISTERS
Tim and Barbara Cook

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Michael Begeman
Pamela Begeman
Mary Anne Best
Eric DeJernett
Donald Genung
Jim McCune
Lauri Raymond

MUSIC
Susan Bouden, Director
musicdir@consciousharmony.org
Sue Young

YOUTH EDUCATION SERVICES
Deborah Hale, Children's Director
childmin@consciousharmony.org
Jacque Botto, Assistant to the Children's Director
Don Hale, Youth Director
youthdir@consciousharmony.org
David Jenkins, Assistant to the Youth Director

OFFICE
Mon-Fri 8:30 am-4:30 pm
Donald Genung, Business Mgr
bizmgr@consciousharmony.org
Lisa Genung, Office Mgr
officemgr@consciousharmony.org

BOOKSTORE
Sun 9-10 am & 11:30 am-12:30 pm
Mon-Fri 9 am-3:30 pm
Virginia Maxwell, Manager
bookmgr@consciousharmony.org

NEWSLETTER
Sandra Ely, Editor
garzaely@swbell.net
Carol Haagar, Design
lfeisart@austin.rr.com

Gratitude for God's Good Gifts and for Those Who Have Gone Before

by Barbara Cook

As I contemplated this month's theme, Reverence for the Elderly; I was amused and amazed to reflect that I, myself, could be, might be or should be considered elderly. In that vein, I can truthfully say it has taken me this long to realize just how little I know and how often I have been wrong. It took the first 36 years of my life to realize how much I needed God in my life and the last 34 years to deepen and grow in that relationship with God. Abraham Joshua Heschel said it well, "It takes a life time to become human." I feel that I'm just now on the edge of that possibility.

Tim and I recently returned from Miami where we spent some time with family and attended the annual meeting of Contemplative Outreach. Then we had a brief retreat at St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado followed by a family wedding in Denver. All of that activity made it clear that I have received abundant stabilizing grace through Centering Prayer, Fr. Thomas Keating and Contemplative Outreach. It has enabled me to fully live the rich life I have been given.

Even though Tim and I have been on the spiritual journey our entire married life, everything really became clear, solid, and fruitful after we read *Open Heart Open Mind* by Fr. Thomas and we went from meditation to Centering Prayer. And that change reached all of us when Fr.

Thomas came to Austin and taught our entire community Centering Prayer. That visit also began a relationship with Contemplative Outreach, the worldwide Centering Prayer community. At the Miami meeting, we met many longtime friends and practitioners with whom we share an annual connection, and see the wonderful work that the Holy Spirit is doing in this community of friends who have said yes to God. Seeing each other over decades makes it obvious that God is at work in each of our lives, opening and healing us. I have so much respect for these elders who have given themselves to God through this prayer and life of service.

The amazing grace I enjoyed with my family, and the incredible dance the Holy Spirit created in combining valuable time with family and the conference, could have only come from God with my amazed and cooperative consent. My little brain could never have worked it all out; but then it really didn't need to, since Centering Prayer has taught me to simply consent. So I simply did my part and God took care of making everything work out.

During our visit to St. Benedict's Monastery, the home of Fr. Thomas and Fr. William Menninger, two of the founders of Centering Prayer, we reconnected with our dear friends, the blessed contemplative monks.

They welcome all the retreatants who come there to share the great depth of this beautiful prayer. Many of our brother monks are elders themselves sharing their aliveness and love as they journey ever-deeper into God. We also had a couple of meetings with Fr. Thomas, who people all over the world know as a wise and loving teacher, guide and elder on this Christian contemplative path. He has acquainted the contemporary Christian world with an ancient form of prayer that has barely been known outside monasteries for nearly 500 years, since the time of St. John of the Cross. He has been a friend and trustworthy elder and mentor to thousands. To top it off, we also reconnected with the staff at the Retreat Center, beloved companions, mentors and friends on the Way.

So much grace has come through the Prayer and the deepening relationship with God, which has been fostered, nurtured and encouraged by those who have gone before. In the Cistercian Order, there's Fr. Thomas Keating, Fr. William Menninger, Abbott Joseph Boyle and all our brother monks at St. Benedict's. In Contemplative Outreach, we have Fr. Carl Arico, Gail Fitzpatrick-Hoppler, Pat Johnson, Mary Ann Matheson, Sr. Bernadette Teasdale, Fr. Bill Sheehan. These and many others are our honored elders.

This is the month in which we stop for a special day to give thanks to God for the abundant harvest of all he has given us this year. I give thanks for the elders that have illumined my path, both those who are here and those who are on the other side cheering us on. What a grace and blessing they are. I also give thanks for all of you who have taken up this simple prayer of faith and transformation. You will be elders for those who come behind you, a gift and a light on the

Way of Christ. The gift of self-transcendence that comes through the Prayer makes each of us able to be lights to others and a gift back to God. I'm grateful for all those who give of themselves through service to the Prayer and those who take the time to give themselves to God in retreats. And I am thankful to you for the gifts you will be able to share as time progresses and your prayer deepens. All things and all beings work together for good for those who love God. ☸

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to participate in worldly affairs and by which we were imprinted with our superficial identity. But now, instead of adding more and more powers and controls, more affection and approval from others and more symbols of security, we begin to do the opposite. With a Christ-like attitude of trusting totally in God for our entire well-being, we begin to progressively let go in a process that the Christian tradition refers to as *kenosis*, self-emptying. This is how we begin to follow the Way of Christ,

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23)

Follow him where? To our personal resurrection, our transformation, of course.

This process proceeds almost magically in the ordinary affairs of

our lives as we begin to notice our interior reactions to the unavoidable frustrations of daily life in the world. Each time we don't get our way. Each time we feel ignored, each time our plans don't work out, each time we fear loss; we learn to see it as a welcome opportunity to practice *kenosis*, the self-emptying that gradually returns us to simple innocence. Each time we let go of a deeply conditioned, selfish reaction, we feel grateful that our lives are becoming more and more like Christ's life and less and less our own.

As we increasingly develop a "taste for the game" of returning our lives to God, we are able to meet frustration with an increasingly delighted spirit of "Thank you. You owe me nothing. I owe you everything." ☸

CCH Bookstore

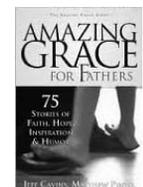
November reading suggestions



*The Gift of Years
Growing Older Gracefully*
by Jan Chittister



*Creative Aging
Rethinking Retirement
in a Changing World*
by Marjory Zoet Bankson



*Amazing Grace for Fathers
75 Stories of Faith, Hope,
Inspiration & Humor*
by J. Cavins, M. Pinto, M & P Armstrong

From Age-ing to Sage-ing
by Z. Schachter-Shalomi
and Ronald Miller

Bookstore and Library Hours
Monday-Friday 9 am-3:30 pm
Sunday 9-10 am & 11:30 am-12:30 pm



God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good. Genesis 1:31

Annual Aim: A Sacred World

Soundings of Conscious Harmony

Reverence for the Elderly: The Grace of Ageing

by Ann C. Kirk

What we owe the old
is reverence ...
consideration, attention,
not to be discarded and forgotten.
...One father finds it possible
to sustain a dozen children,
yet a dozen children find it impossible to
sustain one father...

The God of Israel did not proclaim:

‘Honor Me, Revere Me.’

He proclaimed instead:

‘Revere your father
and your mother.’

There is no reverence for God without
reverence for father and mother...

There is no limit to what one
ought to do in carrying out
this privilege of devotion.

God is invisible,
but my mother is His presence.

Abraham Joshua Heschel,
To Grow in Wisdom,

1961 White House Conference on Aging

Revere thy father and thy mother.

Exodus 20:12

“Nature herself teaches us that age demands dignity and honor. The older the redwoods, the more majestic. The older wines and cheeses are, the more they are praised and honored for taste. Should it not hold true that the older a man, the more he is to be appreciated by others. I am convinced that young people are missing one of the greatest opportunities available when they do not get to know the elderly and associate with them. All too soon these towering pillars of faith and wisdom will pass from our midst and the loss will be tremendous.” Unknown

Can you imagine a little girl about two feet tall, skinny with straight blond hair, and searching brown eyes that were drinking in the world? She began labeling things, people and events as good, better and best; then trying to reconcile it with tugs from the heart and wanting to embrace it all. She learned from overboard experiences to be cautious after exposing too much of herself. But now, I know it was God’s grace to “see through my heart.” Some people and places made deep imprints over the decades to form today’s “me”—the over-the-hill, elderly person, grandmother and gal that Tim Cook calls Annie. Let me start by

introducing you to my God-given mentors, my maternal grandparents.

Granddad Wilson had a clothing store on the main street in a small town in middle Tennessee. Like all family businesses, my mother worked there beginning in her early teens. After her marriage, she moved away. On most holidays, we drove to visit with these grandparents. We went to church on Sundays and had family dinners with my uncles and their families. I loved these times in a way that only grandchildren could. So when Granddad and Grandmother Wilson sold the store and moved to Cocoa Beach, Florida in 1935, it was natural that we would

visit them there. Later, we moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida where Dad got a job as a salesman. The years during World War II brought many changes to the sleepy town of Fort Lauderdale. Gas was rationed so we could not travel as often to my grandparents in Cocoa Beach, which was one hundred and seventy miles north. The government imposed a speed limit of 35 miles per hour so it seemed like a very long drive. So in the extra hot summer months, in the days before air conditioning, my grandparents retreated to a rental farm in the eastern hills of Tennessee where Granddad had a garden and chickens. I was sent to be “fattened up” on their home-grown food and grew to love these long visits. Granddad had brothers and other relatives who still lived nearby. On these visits I was expected to sit quietly, jump immediately if someone wanted another glass of tea, and always offer to do the washing up. That may have involved going to the well for water, heating it on the wood stove regardless of the hot and steamy weather, and using two big dishpans. One of my great aunts would stand by to dry and put away the dishes. I’m curious now as to why I was the only teenager at these gatherings. Regardless, I was well-fed not only by the home-grown food but by the food of impressions provided by my elders.

I look back to my maternal grandparents who perhaps by today’s standards were dogmatic and firm; yet they were excellent role

models for me. Their enjoyment of a simple lifestyle, modeling basic values, and expressing genuine love and support of family, provided a strong grounding in love and reverence for God and all life.

Also what I took away from these summer visits was a close love and respect for ageing adults. My grandmother taught me to sew, my grandfather sometimes played cards with me, and both modeled how to sit meditatively in a rocking chair on the porch and let the present moment be all that matters. Neither liked to chatter, occasionally we would listen to a radio if we had batteries for it or read by a kerosene lamp. Early bedtimes encouraged one to awaken to welcome a beautiful sunrise.

Now I live in a comfortable apartment at a senior living center not far from The Church of Conscious Harmony. Considerable downsizing was needed when my husband, John, and I moved to our apartment in the independent living building seven years ago. We missed our privacy, personal routines and necessary duties to maintain our lives. Yet, wisely, we took several trips our first year there, and it began to truly be home after each return.

In the second year, we invited all the residents to attend a meeting for Contemplative Prayer. I asked Barbara Cook to help establish the group. We introduced the background and concepts, showed the first series of Fr. Thomas Keating’s video tapes on Centering Prayer, and included the Welcoming Prayer. Our

gatherings were meaningful; some inquired, visited, and tasted, but did not become committed. John and I continued. Eventually, two people became regulars. By the grace of God, I now have six faithful prayer friends who join me every week in my apartment. After opening with twenty minutes in silence, I lead a scripture reading in the Lectio Divina practice, and we share any concerns in closing. A senior living center is often called “the waiting room for God,” so there are frequent losses and serious illnesses to take away and remember in daily prayer.

John and I had five years together in our apartment before John’s Alzheimer’s disease progressed. Then my children and I decided that for his best care we should move him to the Memory Support in the adjoining building.

On an Easter Sunday morning a few months after this separation of 61 years of marriage, I started out on an early walk. Starting up the steep hill, the sun was rising. My mood was sad. Then halfway to the top, I was encompassed in a brilliant golden sunlight. I now believe this to be like death ... walking into God’s glory. Nearing the crest I burst into laughter, the joy could not be contained within. I continued my walk past magnificent homes, splendid yards and gardens, and even two men in armor guarding a property’s entrance. As I continued drinking in the beauty of another day, my body and soul responded to the freshness of the morning. I

reflected on Easters of the past and how each memory had strengthened my faith for the year ahead. I began looking for signs and lessons that day to guide me through life's changes. To my joy and surprise – never doubt God's sense of humor – an armadillo crossed the road ahead of me. He looked as though he owned the world. A favorite phrase of self-remembering came to mind, "God is in everything and in the people in my life." For I see God's care and presence especially in our wonderful staff people. They make our community thrive and treat each resident with respect and dignity. I've observed warm friendliness and a caring attitude develop among the staff and our residents, even though we may be forgetful, impatient or demanding. Perhaps being free of household responsibilities allows us residents to remember ourselves as Fr. Keating advises in a recent book, *Reflections on the Unknowable*.

"Old age is the time to do nothing in order to be more and more taken over—body, soul and spirit—by this incredible love that is always with us... (It) has to be uncovered by a certain amount of discipline, by the trials of life, and trust and self-surrender to the immediate presence of God."

The immediate presence of God was felt the morning that John passed away last December. I had been reading Psalm 108 in *Lectio Divina* to him from Nan Merrill's *Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness*. After the fourth reading

of the psalm, I suggested that we choose one line to remind us of God's presence through the day. I said, "John, shall we use 'Ob Joy! Ob Gratitude! I arise to the new dawn'?" He did not reply, and I realized he had slipped away during the final reading of lectio, the "resting in (*contemplatio*)" phase of the scripture reading. My daughter had just returned to the room in those moments when we weren't sure if he had let go. For some time we stayed present with his spirit, and I am so grateful to have shared this with him. The treasured memories come to me in unexpected moments – some with tears, most with joy, and a few with big laughs.

As human beings, we could wish to recognize other people as ourselves – whether they are of a different race, color, culture, young or old. Some of us shy away from older adults because they may be needy or have lost their looks and physical abilities. I'm learning to be open and interested in new members in our residential community. Some are gracious and delightful; others may be set in their ways, opinionated or just plain crabby. Still I find that their life stories and adventures give me a chance to grow in wisdom. I

realize that we older adults can become childlike, relish silly humor and appreciate good news. Given the opportunity, my thoughts or suggestions are to listen to our stories, not the events, but the realizations we have uncovered for ourselves. They may seem simple, boring or silly. Yet our stories may give you the courage to do as Oscar Wilde suggested, "Be yourself. Everyone else is taken."

As I live these senior years, I continue to discern what is of God: what nourishes my aim to love and be love, knowing that my generation grew up in a time of more silence and less divided attention. I believe this was a gift for us grey-haired, life-worn persons, enabling us to develop resilience, understanding and hope. We wish to pass these basic spiritual realities on to all to help heal our world.

I wish we could gather with the young, younger, and youngest to listen to each others needs and desires, opening to a vow of a Holy Spirit compromise, asking God for guidance for the next step, and then the next one. Ever listening, opening, waiting, and remembering God's first word is silence ... a grace that resonates in us all, young and old. 

"Well, I can only say what the elders in monasteries have always said, which is persevere, meaning, keep doing it, and just accept what happens. When you actually consent, you're giving away any control whatsoever over the results of what you're doing."

Fr. Thomas Keating, *Contemplative Outreach*
"Celebrating 30 Years of Grace and Gratitude" in response to Fr. Carl Arico's question,
"What would you like to say to the [Contemplative Outreach] community as they're celebrating their 30th anniversary?"

2015 Centering Prayer Retreat Schedule

Half-day and One-day Centering Prayer Retreats held at The Church of Conscious Harmony

Jan 10 8:30 am-4:30 pm (p)
Feb 14 8:30 am-4:30 pm (p)
Mar 21 United in Prayer Day - location tbd
April 4 8:30 am-12:30 pm
Jun 13 8:30 am-4:30 pm (p)
July 25 8:30 am-12:30 pm
Sept 19 8:30 am-4:30 pm (b)
Oct 17 8:30 am-4:30 pm (b)
Nov 14 12:30 pm-5:00 pm
Dec 12 8:30 am-4:30 pm (p)
(b) - brown bag lunch (p) - potluck lunch
Cost: Half-day ~ \$10 love offering One-day ~ \$15 love offering

Two-Day Commuter Centering Prayer Retreats at The Church of Conscious Harmony

Feb 15-16
Sun. 8 am-5:30 pm* Mon. 7 am-4:30 pm
May 15-16
Fri. 7:00 am-4:30 pm Sat. 7:30 am-4:30 pm
Aug 15-16
Sat. 8:45 am-5:45 pm Sun. 8 am-5:30 pm
Oct 18-19
Sun 8 am-5:30 pm* Mon. 7am-4:30 pm

Cost: Two-day commuter retreat \$100 (sleep at home; meals included)
* Can be combined with the Saturday 1-day retreat, for a 3-day retreat experience

Multi-day Centering Prayer Retreats at Cedarbrake Retreat and Renewal Center

Jan 21-25 5-day Renewal Cost: \$425
Feb 27-Mar 8 10-day Lenten Cost: \$825
Jun 19-28 10-day Cost: \$825
Jun 19-23 5-day Cost: \$425
Jun 23-28 6-day Cost: \$495
Sep 11-16 6-day Forgiveness with Mary Dwyer Cost: \$615
Dec 4-10 7-day Advent Cost: \$625

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

Nov 15
1/2 Day Centering Prayer Retreat 12:30-5pm

Nov 22
Solving the Problem of Supply
Enrichment Offering led by Tim
9am-noon Register with the office

Nov 27 Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner
Doors open at noon - dinner at 2pm
Contact the office for details

MONTHLY

1st Sundays
Bring non-perishable items for Caritas

Nov 8
Community Work Day 9am-noon

Nov 18
Gurdjieff Music 7:30-8:30pm

WEEKLY

Sundays
Lectio Divina 8-9am
Fellowship 9am-9:35am
Worship Service 10-11:30am
Youth Program 10-11:30am
Fellowship 11:30am-noon

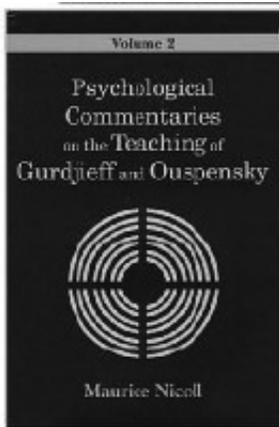
Wednesdays
Prayer Circle 9:15-10am
Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm
Communion Service 6-7pm

Thursdays
Work of Inner Christianity Class 7:30-9pm

Fridays
Devotional Service 7:30-8:45pm

DAILY
Mondays-Fridays 7-7:35am
Centering Prayer Service in Theosis Chapel

Recordings of services are available
through the Bookstore and online at
www.consciousharmony.org



The Work of Inner Christianity

My Father is still working, and I also am working. John 5:17

The Body as the Ultimate Degree of Oneself

When we take ourselves as our bodies, we get a wrong impression of ourselves. This impression, acting as a cause, produces as an effect the idea that we are nothing but our bodies. Now an effect cannot persist actively, if the cause producing it ceases. If we begin to get another impression of ourselves the idea that we are *not* only our bodies may replace the former idea. The replacement of the former idea by the latter idea is important. Actually, it is of the greatest importance in regard to anyone's psychological development. In this Work, we cannot work if we remain in the belief that we are only our manifest bodies. We will then be one with our bodies—that is, we will have no feeling of ourselves distinct from our visible, physical bodies. And it is extraordinary and only realizable very gradually how we cling to this physical concept of ourselves. One can scarcely call it a concept. It is a percept. We can see our bodies, perceive them. We look in the glass and perceive our bodies, and so mentally we take it that we are them. We leave out one little thing—namely, what sees our bodies in the glass? If you say: “We

do,” then do you mean that body sees body or what? It seems strange that a thing can see itself in a glass without the aid of something else. I do not think that even the gilt chairs in the mirrored drawing room spend their idle time in seeing themselves.

How are we to take our bodies if we are not to take them as ourselves? The question is connected with notes in octaves, or degrees, which are the same. The physical body is the most external degree of ourselves. That is, it is the lowest or ultimate degree through which all higher or more internal degrees, such as belong to thought, feeling and will, manifest themselves. The body does not think. The spirit of Man thinks and communicates through the body. The body is in touch with the external world and it is also our own external world. One seems incongruous, the other at least more congruous. The external world of trees, clouds, mountains, streams and oceans seems foreign and so, incongruous. You cannot do much with a lovely view. But even our own bodies can seem strange and incongruous, at times—these fingers, nails, teeth, this hair, nose, mouth,

this head, this wart—so much so that for a flash you may sometimes wonder if it really is you. All the same, it is you, but only the lowest or ultimate degree of you that enables you to be in touch with this external world. If you take the lowest degree as the whole of yourself you will, as said, miss something of the greatest importance. You will not be able to remember yourself. You are not your body. You look through your body into the external world which you would not see if you had no body because the lowest or ultimate degree would be missing. In that case the next degree would constitute your lowest or ultimate degree and you would see another world and where you are in it, as is sometimes possible in dreams, or even by direct perception. Try, then, to feel at times that you are not just your body, but that you are looking through it and seeing things and people in this world by means of it. This gives a feeling of Self-Remembering. Why is this so? 

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, pages 1449-1450. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the *Work of Inner Christianity* class held Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at The Church of Conscious Harmony.

Youth and Aged

“What message have you for young people?” asked Carl Stern of NBC in concluding a television interview with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel shortly before his death.

Rabbi Heschel replied: “... Let them remember that there is a meaning beyond absurdity. Let them be sure that every deed counts, that every word has power, and that we all can do our share to redeem the world in spite of all absurdities and all frustrations and all disappointments.

“And, above all, [let them] remember ... to build a life as if it were a work of art.”

In enabling us to reach old age, medical science may think that it gave us a blessing: however, we continue to act as if it were a disease. ...

Old age is not a defeat but a victory, not a punishment but a privilege. ...

Rich in perspective, experienced in failure, the person advanced in years is capable of shedding prejudices and the fever of vested interests. He does not see anymore in every fellow man a person who stands in his way, and competitiveness may cease to be his way of thinking.

The goal is not to keep the old man busy, but to remind him that every moment is an opportunity for greatness. Inner purification is at least as important as hobbies and recreation. 

Edited by Samuel H. Dresner, *I Asked for Wonder, A Spiritual Anthology, Abraham Joshua Heschel*, pages 63-64.

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

4th Guideline



The term original sin is a way of describing the human condition, which is the universal experience of coming to full reflective self-consciousness without the certitude of personal union with God. This gives rise to our intimate sense of incompleteness, dividedness, isolation, and guilt.

SEEDS

He who is spiritually “born” as a mature identity is liberated from the enclosing womb or myth and prejudice.

He learns to think for himself, guided no longer by the dictates of need and by the systems and processes designed to create artificial needs and then “satisfy” them.

This emancipation can take two forms: first that of the active life, which liberates itself from enslavement to necessity by considering and serving the needs of others, without thought of personal interest or return.

And second, the contemplative life, which must not be construed as an escape from time and matter, from social responsibility and from the life of sense, but rather, as an advance into solitude and the desert, confrontation with poverty and the void, a renunciation of the empirical self, in the presence of death, and nothingness, in order to overcome the ignorance and error that spring from the fear of being nothing.

Thomas Merton, *Seeds*, page 22.



The Church of Conscious Harmony
A Contemplative Christian Community
7406 Newhall Lane Austin, Texas 78746

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The liturgical season begins with Advent,
a period of intense preparation to understand
and accept the three comings of Christ.

The first is His historical coming in human weakness
and the manifestation of His divinity in the world;
the second is His spiritual coming in our inmost being;
the third is His final coming at the end of time
in His glorified humanity . . .

The coming of Christ into our conscious lives
presupposes a presence of Christ
that is already within us waiting to be awakened.

The Christmas-Epiphany mystery invites us
to take possession of what is already ours.

As Thomas Merton put it,
we are 'to become what we already are.'

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

Advent

*For in her is a spirit intelligent, holy, unique,
manifold, subtle, agile, clear, unstained, certain,
not baneful, loving the good, keen,
unhindered, beneficent, kindly, firm, secure, tranquil,
all-powerful, all-seeing, and pervading all spirits ...*

*Wisdom is mobile beyond all motion,
and she penetrates and pervades all things
by reason of her purity.*

*For she is an aura of the might of God
and a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty;
therefore nought that is sullied enters into her.*

*For she is the refulgence of eternal light,
the spotless mirror of the power of God,
the image of His goodness.*

*And she, who is one, can do all things,
And renews everything while herself perduring
and passing into holy souls from age to age,
She produces friends of God and prophets.*

Wisdom 7:22-27