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THE MARK

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*Blessed are the
pure of heart*

PURE OF HEART

by Tim Cook

My earliest memories of the idea of purity come from advertisements for Ivory soap. If you are old enough to remember those old radio and print commercials, you too will no doubt remember the tag line that was repeated countless times in the background of sights and sounds that accompanied our earlier lives. The line went, “Ivory Soap, 99-44/100% Pure: It Floats.” Purity seemed light and airily angelic.

My dictionary defines the idea of pure as “not mixed or adulterated with any other substance or material” and “free of any contamination” and “wholesome and untainted by immorality, especially of a sexual nature.” That definition pretty well describes the atmosphere of my early religious conditioning. It was filled with images of purity that were, for me at least, utterly unattainable. The threatened penalty for that sort of impurity was, of course, eternal damnation and torment for the “soiled” soul. With the help of an older person, my soul had been soiled pretty early in life and as far as I knew I had lost my chance for salvation.

In response to this difficult crisis in my emotional development, I adopted a depressed defensive armor of shame and guilt. I was unworthy of love. Unknowingly I was participating in creating an inner world of damnation and torment that was, even at that moment, visiting me with the horrors that threatened for the after-life of impure people like me. Since my inner experience did not square with the way my environment taught me I was supposed to act and feel, I did what so many of us do; I repressed my inner life into the unconscious shadow of denial and attempted to look and act like I felt okay about myself. But inside, I felt nothing like the airy and angelic purity that seemed to be required to see God. I felt dark and unlovable and I never saw or felt God.

Things stayed pretty much that way until 1968, when a friend unexpectedly gave me a book, *The Wisdom of Insecurity* by Allen Watts, that awakened me to the experience of a level of consciousness and experience of life that I never even knew existed before that. Quite suddenly I could

see. I saw and felt God’s presence everywhere, in nature, in people, and in the ordinary life of the big city I lived in. Unusually for me, I found myself talking to strangers, picking up hitchhikers and boring my rugby club roommates with endless descriptions of the wonders of simply being alive. I felt literally reborn as the ordinary background sense of guilt and shame seemed to vanish. That new life went on for about three weeks and then it disappeared. But by then I knew without doubt that God is the Truth of our lives and I knew that the glorious memory of that experience could never be erased from my mind. After that brief mind open, heart open, sight of the Living Presence I knew that recovering and living out that state of consciousness was all my life is about.

I hadn’t done anything to deserve that graceful intervention in my depressed life. I certainly hadn’t planned it or even wished for it. It had clearly been a sheer gift and I wanted to taste it again with every fiber of my being. But it didn’t make me pure in the Ivory soap sense of the word. I

was still a man with the same habits, the same desires, the same language, the same issues and the same troubles with relationships but something had been added to those ongoing conditions. It was the spiritual context of the Presence of God. And I was on fire with another kind of purity; the purity of a single-minded hunger to be always aware that I live in the Presence of God.

That very hunger is what the 15th century Indian mystic poet, Kabir was referring to in his well-known poem, *Friend, Hope For The Guest While You Are Alive*, translated by Robert Bly,

Friend, hope for the Guest while you are alive. Jump into experience while you are alive! Think... and think... while you are alive. What you call 'salvation' belongs to the time before death. If you don't break your ropes while you're alive, do you think ghosts will do it after? The idea that the soul will join with the ecstatic just because the body is rotten — that is all fantasy. What is found now is found then. If you find nothing now, you will simply end up with an apartment in the City of Death. If you make love with the divine now, in the next life you will have the

face of satisfied desire. So plunge into the truth, find out who the Teacher is, believe in the Great Sound!

Kabir says this: When the Guest is being searched for, it is the intensity of the longing for the Guest that does all the work. Look at me, and you will see a slave of that intensity.

It is the **intensity** of the **longing** that does **all** the work. Notice carefully that Kabir is not saying that it is the intensity of the efforts we make that do the necessary work. He calls us to simply experience our deep longing for the touch of Reality. That kind of intensity, that purity of longing for the touch and taste of God's love will never come from adhering to strict ascetical rules, behavior codes or denying the less acceptable parts of our personality. We'll never behave our way to intimacy with God because intimacy with God is a matter of identity, not behavior. Our behavior gradually changes and moderates as we grow closer and closer to God and realize that through Christ we are already Children of God. The attraction of lesser interests diminishes as we see the relative poverty of meaning and aimlessness of the ordinary fascinations and objects of our attention. Compared to the felt love of God what could our

personal preoccupations ever bring us but what they have brought us before. We feel blessed to let go of our efforts to act our way to grace and simply receive it as God's gracious response to our deep yearning. Our twice-daily practice of Centering Prayer opens us to that simple receptivity and increases our experience of His blessed Presence. Our practice purifies us by increasing our longing for God.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul revealed that all of creation is yearning right along with us and that God is leading us through a great transformation. Eugene Peterson's wonderful translation in *The Message*, expresses it simply and clearly.

Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them — living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God

is and what he is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored. But if God himself has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him. Anyone, of course, who has not welcomed this invisible but clearly present God, the Spirit of Christ, won't know what we're talking about. But for you who welcome him, in whom he dwells – even though you still experience all the limitations of sin – you yourself experience life on God's terms. It stands to reason, doesn't it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he'll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's! So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go! This resurrection life

you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us – an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him! That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens. All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing

us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy. Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. (Romans 8:5-27 *The Message*)

I still have a long way to grow if I'm ever to reach the angelically, airy, floaty Ivory soap sort of purity concept of my youth. Of course, I'll continue to grow, but now I know that's not even an issue. God always loves us just as we are. Our purity is the purity of the desire to let him love us. The purity of our spiritual hunger gives Him access to our hearts. ☉

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

by Barbara Cook

We are so blessed! The Church of Conscious Harmony is a community that is established for the sole purpose of facilitating our Spiritual Journey into Christ. Our church bylaws are founded on that principle. This strong and narrowly focused aim helps us to stay engaged with reality and keeps us growing toward the one truly valuable goal of human life. Our church also provides us with community support and the tools of transformation to lead us deeper into Christ.

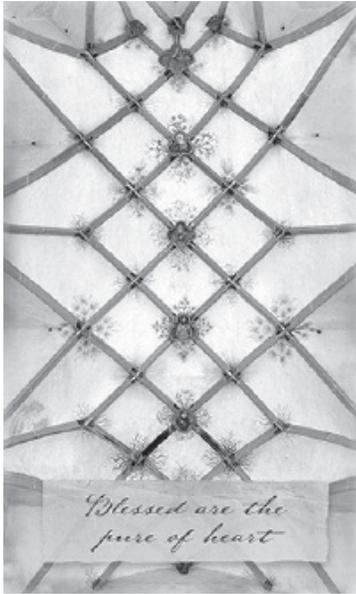
Jesus invited each of us to join him in the regeneration of the human race. In the waters of Baptism, we die with Christ and rise with Christ. Likewise in Centering Prayer, we have been given a means to literally die to ourselves every day twice a day, so that our false-self may actually decrease, and Christ in us can increase. That is a very difficult process if one doesn't have a clear understanding of the call and the

support to move in that direction. But thanks be to God; we do have the necessary support. We've been given a clear understanding of the contemplative dimension of the Gospel and an extensive and thorough map of the contemplative journey by Fr Thomas Keating, who is a 70 year traveler on the path. We also have the Work of Inner Christianity to help us see ourselves with honesty and to understand how our ordinary motivations that are rooted in childish programs for happiness were formed when we felt cut off from God and our inherent good; and how we became lost in our small, personal, false-self "I".

"Blessed are the pure of heart." Centering Prayer opens the self to the presence of God, which always dwells in each of us. That Presence begins to grow in us and we begin to know God and we begin to know ourselves in the light of God within. Gradually

we begin to be able to let go of who we thought we were and our childish motivations diminish. Our hearts begin to open and clear. What was a heart filled with partial knowledge, judgements, opinions, attitudes, wants, desires, accounts and undigested emotions that make it unable to be pure or clear enough to see God begins to open and soften. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, loosening and getting rid of these obstacles to clear our vision. We participate by willingly looking inside and being willing to let go and to grow.

Fr. Thomas says that in contemplative prayer we are being given the X-ray eyes of faith. We begin to see God in and through all. We are so blessed here in this community, because if we want what is promised in the good news, everything is here for our growth. What do I want? That is what I will get. Blessed are the pure of heart for they will see God. 



Come, O you blessed of my Father! Matthew 25:34

ANNUAL AIM: BLESSED

Create for me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51:12

**BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART,
FOR THEY WILL SEE GOD** by David Wallace

A rising consciousness does not exclude or negate. Rather, it connects us with a wider and wider range as does light on a dark night. It opens the real, inner heart, wider than and beyond the closed self-willed, self-loving, exclusive heart.

It leads to compassion for the world, a compassion that isn't a sentimental *act*, or an effortful trying. Rather, it is an effortless, natural *state* of insight with a new feeling of I. Cf. Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*

The heart sees – that is, understands – the existence of the higher level, of God, of the reality of the teaching of Christ. Maurice Nicoll, *The New Man*

The fruit of this vision is an active cooperation in bringing to realization the Kingdom of God within the terrestrial domain, i.e. in the transformation of natural evolution into a new evolution, an evolution willed and directed by the Divine.

Valentin Tomberg, *Lazarus, Come Forth!*

If anyone would ask me my age, I'll tell them that I'm 48. But I've only been "alive" for the last four. That best sums up my spiritual journey, chronologically speaking. I was raised a Roman Catholic in suburban Philadelphia. My parents were Catholic and parochial school graduates. So it made sense that I would follow suit. Religious life to me was about being unworthy and having to earn God's love. Earning God's love consisted of doing my "Catholic chores" by going to Sunday mass each week (and not

missing because it was a mortal sin), never using God's name in vain, honoring my mother and father and not eating meat on Fridays during Lent, among the biggies like not stealing or killing another. It was as if the scolding father God was up there with his checklist keeping score, looking to validate my unworthiness for His Kingdom.

In the second grade, the pastor of our church came into my religion class as he would do here and there. During the question time after his talk, I asked, "Father, my best friend

lives across the street and is Jewish. Since they don't believe Jesus was the Son of God, what happens to him when he dies?" Father thought a moment and said, "Son, be happy you're with the right group." What? That can't be the answer! There are some of us that are chosen? What did I do to deserve that? That jagged pill was tough to swallow at eight. At age 16, my father left home for another woman. That completely devastated my mother. She never saw it coming. Mom, feeling abandoned by her husband, wanted to feel the acceptance of her church community. She went to see one of the priests and explained the story of how she was completely happy with her three kids and her marriage. She never wanted a divorce and wanted her Church to accept her back so she could receive Communion. She was told that unless she annulled the marriage, she could not receive Communion in the Church. What kind of Church, or God, decides who is in and who is out? Where's the love? Where's the compassion? Well, that was that! From that moment on, I wanted nothing to do with the Catholic Church or God, if he existed at all.

For the next 25 years, I couldn't even call myself a "None" (or "Spiritually Independent"). I was

devoid of any religious practice or spirituality. As a white middle class man that had a successful college life, a good job right out of school and my first mortgage by age 23 (after getting married in the same year), I was well on my way to what culture would define as "happily ever after." Or so I thought.

Fr. Richard Rohr states that Westerners have the toughest time with spirituality because many of us don't feel the "sting" of life. I had no tragedy to speak of in my life, I had a comfortable home growing up, a Big Wheel, a bike and an Atari video game. Wasn't that normal for everyone? I never felt any prejudice or discomfort in life. To a large degree, there was a feeling of invincibility and entitlement. Life was there for the taking. Expectations for my wife, my kids, my job title, what I needed to drive, where I needed to live and the amount of money and respect I was entitled to ran my life.

Life was all about getting more possessions and status. I remained in a toxic marriage because as Richard Rohr says, we love our comfort. I thought of ending it many times, but rationalized that I was doing it for the kids. Looking back, that was a lie and I was a coward. I didn't want to face life in a smaller home, in another neighborhood or

lose half of my 401K. I potentially sacrificed a Real Life for comfort to avoid any sting or embarrassment. Well, even that got the better of me in 2010. My arrogance had rose to such a point that I finally did what I thought I could never do because my Dad did it to my Mother, which was to go outside of my marriage to get my needs met.

After being found out, an ugly divorce followed. I was angry and fighting for everything I could. During this same time, I started having trouble at my job. I felt my leadership was very good, but I began having almost daily conflicts with my boss. Why was he challenging me? I couldn't be wrong! He let me know when I received my first negative personal review. This couldn't be happening. But they say that God gives you only what you can handle, and by His mercy, I met Anna in late summer 2011. I remember telling her when we first met that I had nothing to offer her. I had no vocational passion, I had no spiritual path and I had a terrible track record in my relationship. She must have been able to see something worthwhile in me, because we grew together. In March 2012, we were led to The Church of Conscious Harmony by a former graduate school classmate of mine. As our relationship continued



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to grow, we both agreed that if we could find a Christian path that spoke Truth to us, it would be the mortar for our relationship.

After absorbing and resonating with Tim Cook's message that Sunday about Oneness and Jesus' message of inclusivity versus exclusivity, we knew we were home. Anna and I married in September 2012 and less than a month later, I was fired from my director position. Fired? This could not be happening! I've never been fired at anything! What I didn't understand then was that I had another "fall." First it was my failed marriage and then it was my failed job. There had been no humility in my life prior, but now I was given a hefty heap of humble pie to eat in the span of two years. Unemployment for four months followed, before getting a job with a small recruiting firm at a salary level similar to when I was 24 years old since I didn't have "recruiting" experience. It felt like I went from "somebody" to "nobody" almost instantly. In that same instant, I felt disgusted about who I was. My actions were arrogant, narcissistic, entitled, and "chosen." Facing my shadow side was so daunting and then over time, the blessing in it all came through.

My false self was brought out into the light and as such, I could begin to let go of believing it was "me."

As Christian Mystic, Julian of Norwich put it, "First, there is the fall. And then we recover from the fall. Both are the mercy of God."

My true gift was CCH and the practices I've learned here and adopted as my own. These spiritual tools allowed me to "let go and let God" in the silence and shed light on my false self so that my internal light could shine through my own clouds. I wished to "know and understand." I kept my practice and my practice kept me. Actually, it didn't just keep me. It continues to form me into who I am and what I want to be.

As it says in Luke 16:13,
No one can serve two masters.

Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

Everything instantly changed for me. For the first time in my life, I could see God in people, situations, nature, and myself. In early 2015 during a multi-day retreat at Cedar Brake, still struggling with a fear of loss and continued doubt in my sense of worthiness, I had an experience of God that brought me to my knees sobbing. Walking

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.

23RD GUIDELINE



The moderation of the instinctual drives
of the developing human organism for
survival and security, affection and esteem, control and power
allows true human needs to come into proper focus.
Primary among these needs is intimacy with another
or several human persons.

By intimacy is meant the mutual sharing
of thoughts, feelings, problems, and spiritual aspirations
which gradually develops into spiritual friendship.

down the nature path called
Psalm 23 (The Psalm of David),
I came across the last part of the
Psalm that reads, "You prepare a
table before me in the presence
of my enemies. You anoint my
head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will
follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of
the Lord forever." I finally knew
and understood that God accepts
me as I am, my True Self and my
false self. And in that knowing, I
can feel my true nothingness. If
I'm invited to His table, so we all
are. Compassion is coming more
and more, along with letting go
of judgments and expectations.

I see God's world with ever-
increasing wholeness and beauty.

Blessed are the pure of
heart, for they will see God.

As I start to let my heart
be cleansed by letting go, what
comes forth is love, compassion
and acceptance. My journey is
not about adding anything. The
lie of my separation put a mask
over my eyes. I could not see
my own purity of heart and thus,
could not see God. My prayer
and deepest intention is that my
heart and eyes can see God in all
His creation. That includes me.

*Create for me a clean heart, O
God, and renew a steadfast spirit
within me. Psalm 51:12* 

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SUGGESTED TITLES FOR JUNE



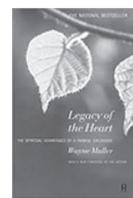
The Restless Heart
by Ronald Rolheiser



Talks on Truth
by Charles Fillmore



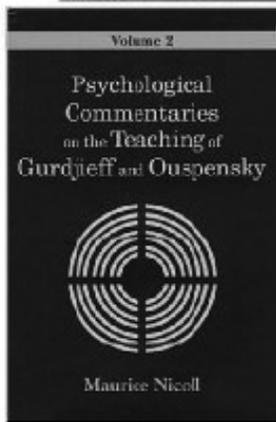
The Heart of the World
by Thomas Keating



Legacy of the Heart
by Wayne Muller

BOOKSTORE AND LIBRARY HOURS

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THE WORK

OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

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

PURITY IS SINCERITY

Visual imagery is a universal language. It is the language of signs. ... To visualize a person is a form of external considering, in the deepest sense. ... You cannot visualize a person in the right way if you are negative towards the person. You have heard that the Emotional Center is clairvoyant when it is purified of negative emotions. Now, you cannot visualize another person if you are doing it from duty. I would advise you very strongly not to attempt it. Visualization is a very quiet activity, a very quiet process. As a rule you only get a quarter of the way and give it up. You can only visualize another person rightly when you know something about yourself. We become human to one another when we know ourselves. An exercise was given to us to visualize one another and to say to the person visualized: "What is your trouble?" and if rightly done it was said that the person would tell you. That is, the

image would speak to you. I can only say that I know this is possible but very difficult. The purification of the Emotional Center is one of the tasks in the Work. We have to handle one another far more gently internally than externally. Many things, some illnesses, headaches, sudden loss of force, begin to happen to us at a certain stage of the Work if we treat *one another* wrongly. The Work is a very pure thing and depends on inner purity. You all understand what it means to be pure by now. What is meant by purity? Purity is sincerity. ... So when you try to visualize someone else, and it takes time to do so and is certainly not worth doing if you are not pure in this sense, you must remember that the whole of the Work comes in at this point. You can help one another, but not without the Work behind you. This visualization is the connection between Intellectual Center and the Emotional Center and if you have an aim to behave rightly towards

somebody, you must visualize yourself behaving rightly, and not merely think it. It is remarkable that a little pure visualization helps everyone and yourself. Merely thinking does not help enough, but is necessary. Mere talking is worse than anything because by talking you are so often justifying yourself. You know how often you say: "Well, I am going to do my best to help him and I promise you I won't say anything unpleasant." And then what happens? Well, observe it in yourself. You have merely fed your imagination and your vanity and done nothing to help the situation. You know when a cat rubs himself against your leg he is caressing, not you but himself. Visualization is *directed imagination*, not a self-pleasurable imagination. ☉

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, pages 467-468. 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.

SEEDS

We must respond to God's gifts gladly and freely
with thanksgiving, happiness and joy:
but in contemplation we thank Him
less by words than by the serene happiness of silent acceptance.

“Be empty and see that I am God.”

It is our emptiness in the presence of the abyss of His reality,
our silence in the presence of His infinitely rich silence,
our joy in the bosom of the serene darkness
in which His light holds us absorbed,
it is all this that praises Him.

It is this that causes love of God and wonder and adoration
to swim up into us like tidal waves
out of the depths of that peace,
and break upon the shores of our consciousness

in a vast, hushed surf of inarticulate praise, praise and glory!

This clear darkness of God is the purity of heart

Christ spoke of in the sixth Beatitude:

Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.

And this purity of heart brings at least a momentary deliverance

from images and concepts,

from the forms and shadows of all the things men desire

with their human appetites.

It brings deliverance even from the feeble and delusive analogies

we ordinarily use to arrive at God—not that it denies them,

for they are true as far as they go,

but it makes them temporarily useless

by fulfilling them all in the sure grasp

of a deep and penetrating experience.

Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, page 231.

JUNE CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

10-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
June 17-26 Preregister with the office.

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
June 25 8:30 am-4:30 pm
\$15 Bring a pot luck dish to share.

MONTHLY

1st Sundays
Bring non-perishables for Caritas

Community Workday
June 4 9 am-noon

Gurdjieff Music
June 21 7:30-8:30 pm

WEEKLY

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

Wednesdays
Prayer Circle 10:15-10:45 am
Contemplative Lunch noon-1 pm
Contemplative Communion Service 6-7 pm

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

Fridays 7:30-8:45 pm
Devotional Service

DAILY

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

Recordings of services are available
through the Bookstore and online at
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Our identity
is so penetrated and suffused
and transformed and glorified,
that there is nothing
but Christ.
No motive but Christ.
No love but Christ.

Thomas Keating, *The Habit of Heartfulness*

THE ASCENT OF THE PURE OF HEART

Since happiness is nothing other than
the enjoyment of the highest good
and since the highest good is above,
no one can be made happy
unless he rise above himself,
not by an ascent of the body, but of the heart.
But we cannot rise above ourselves
unless a higher power lift us up.
... Divine aid is available to those who seek it
from their hearts, humbly and devoutly;
... in this valley of tears, through fervent prayer.
Prayer, then, is the mother and source of the ascent.

St. Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*

*Blessed is the one whose help is from You;
in his heart he has prepared to ascend by steps
in the valley of tears, in the place which has been set.*

Psalm 84:6-7

