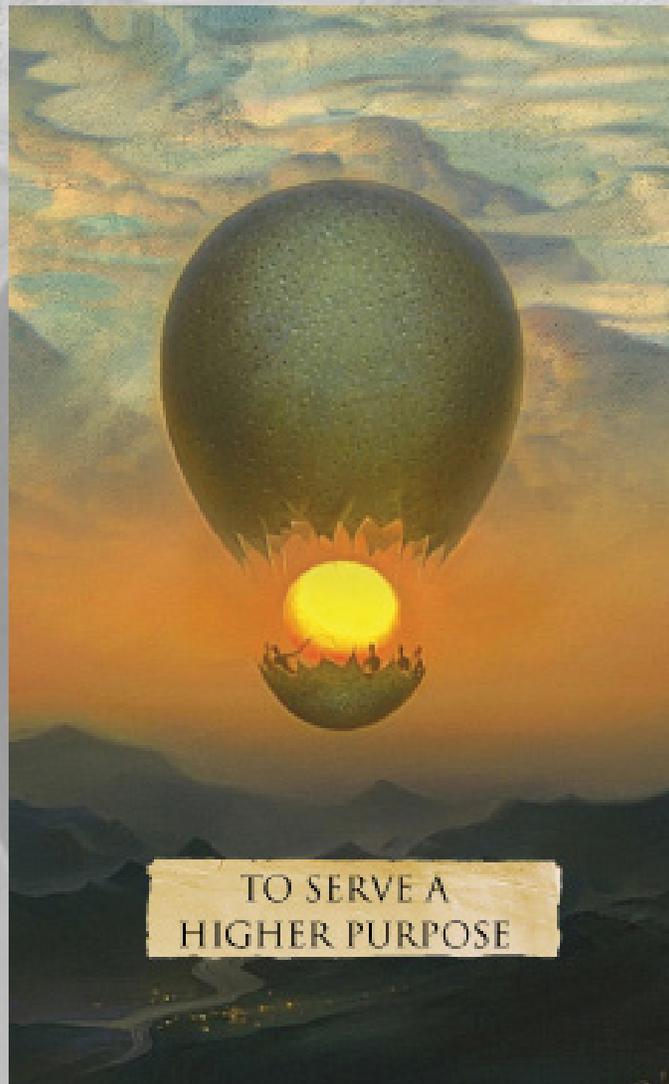


August 2019  
Volume 31  
Number 8



# THE MARK

A Publication of The Church of Conscious Harmony ❖ A Contemplative Christian Community



TO SERVE A  
HIGHER PURPOSE

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# FLIGHTS OF FAITH

BY PETER HAAS

The Annual Aim monthly image on the front cover is one of several images from our annual aim cards that uniquely startles me forward into a kind of flight of insight. I find this month's image to be uncommonly creative, evocative of a spirit of adventure. It invites a second, third and fourth look.

Is this the birth of the sun? Could this be the hatching of humankind warmed by the sun? Is this the great sun filling a hot air balloon with wisdom, raising it above the ordinary experiences of life below? I wonder! The fourth century theologian Gregory of Nyssa wrote that "concepts create idols; only wonder comprehends anything. People kill one another over idols. Wonder makes us fall to our knees." Wonder is so often the bridge that takes us to higher purpose and deeper understanding.

The image also speaks to me of meditative stillness and silence. In this sunrise or sunset moment is perfect symmetry – the sun as a symbol of the divine center. From this energizing center, I wonder if a subtle movement is possible? I wonder if the hot air balloon egg is moving somewhere, carried along

by wind or breath, as an analogy for the Spirit – the unseen force that moves all things?

Perhaps by way of personal application, this image can serve us in asking a consequential question: What influences are filling you up and guiding your way? J.G. Bennett calls us to remember that "the Work [of Inner Christianity] enables us to understand what is required of us, what it is to work and why there is an obligation to serve a higher purpose as consciously as we are able." When filled up on self, it is more challenging to fulfill our highest purpose. When filled up with Spirit, we are born from above, and empowered to surrender more completely – a surrender of self into love, which is our highest destiny.

The ideas of the Work of Inner Christianity are influences that fill our sails with practical wisdom and understanding that help us not just be life-bound people, but people who are born from above – attracted beyond explanation to that which is awaiting our development "above" us in the Ray of Creation, particularly symbolized by the influences of the Sun. The Work is really sunlight for mystics,

providing practical instruction for the all-too-human dilemmas of life on planet earth.

For example, the practical Work idea of "transforming incoming impressions" that are coming into our perception, provides an opportunity for us to see how "moon food" such as criticism, judgement, or belittling, can be transformed by our inner Work of self-observation, non-identification and self-remembering into "Sun food," such as kindness, forgiveness and gratitude.

Though we may desire or be drawn to serve a higher purpose, fear and a weakness of will often get in the way. An ancient parable explains the situation this way:

Faith says:  
Come to the edge.  
We respond:  
"No, we will fall."  
Faith says:  
Come to the edge.  
We respond:  
"NO! We will fall!"  
We come to the edge.  
Spirit pushes us,  
and we fly.

One of the most significant

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“pushes” I have received in my life, occurred thirty years ago this month. It was a blue-sky day in the Adirondack Mountains. The morning light was streaming through the tall front windows of Tibbitts Auditorium. It was Sunday morning, August 27, 1989, and I was at the Camp-of-the-Woods weekly worship service, carefully listening to the compelling New Jersey drawl of a middle-aged, rotund preacher. His down-home wisdom compelled me intellectually, but I also felt, in my solar plexus area, a peaceful, emotional draw to what he was saying.

I remember that he paused his preaching. A silence rose up from the congregation, like a mist on nearby Lake Pleasant. Then, quietly, as if to each of us, the preacher, with a flick of his wrist, dispensed an invitation: “Come down and receive Christ,” he said, “You will never regret it.”

Spirit nudged. I came forward, walking down the century-old wooden stairs in Tibbitts Auditorium and fell to the ground on my knees near the pulpit. Unexpected emotions of a shadowed sadness rose up, perhaps unloading

the hurts of a young lifetime. The wound of being human was now just a bit more healed in the light of Christ’s love.

It is customary to attach religious words to describe these kinds of experiences – words such as conversion, born-again, accepting Jesus, and getting saved. But, for me, in that still, sunlit moment, it felt as easy as breathing; as simple as being, in the instinctive spiritual surrender to the Unknown God.

I could not have known then how different my life would be when I rose from the dusty floor of that Evangelical sanctuary of summertime worship, in the ancient rounds of those Adirondack Mountains. Rising tear-stained, I sensed I was a very different person. I walked down a young man who rarely read a book; I rose a new man with an insatiable hunger for reading. I began the day as a 17-year-old teenager interested in girls and dreaming about becoming a lead singer like Bono. I ended the day studying and seeking wisdom.

Taking that first Sunday step of faith, with boots knocking all the way down the wooden stairway, into what certainly became a

doorway to a deeper, more real way of life. Whatever happened to me that summer morning, next to my birth, I mark August 27, 1989 as the second most important day of my life.

Life was never the same for me. But the preacher was also incomplete in his presentation of the spiritual journey. More completion came with an unexpected discovery of and return to the contemplative way of being Christian. Reading the words of Thomas Merton and Thomas Keating in my first years as a pastor stirred something within me that little in seminary did, connecting me to the wider inward tradition. Experiencing my initial solo retreats at monasteries revealed something very real was at work within me through the stillness and solitude of those places. At each monastery, in different ways, I witnessed in holy elders something like pure, joyful love. I was drawn to their humble wisdom and radiant peace. No doubt, my journey into the contemplative way was a long, yet steady courtship.

This contemplative way continues to deliver me into the night-then-light rhythm of God’s



loving silence. While it may have been suffering that first opened the door, it was silence that greeted me with open arms once the door opened. And that silence led me into a stillness that heals and renews in profoundly precise and graceful ways, such that another word for the silence and stillness has become for me the Presence, which I name Christ.

Looking back now, I see that slowly, through it all, I was being drawn into the contemplative dimension. Its influences not only inspired me to remain a Christian, but also gave me a new, yet ancient way of being a practicing Christian. Apart from daily meditative prayer and selected monastic practices, nothing provided a satisfying answer to these and many other *how* questions. While my consenting to faith in the living Jesus Christ on that late August morning in the Adirondack mountains thirty years ago surely “saved” my life, it is my ongoing infusion through the practices of the contemplative dimension of Christianity that is still saving me from myself and evolving me toward love. There is still much to be healed and transformed within me; and so too the Universal Church. It is a process that theologians call *sanctification*, and Fr. Keating calls the Divine Therapy. I call it *the rhythms of silence singing love into the still space of grace*. Perhaps I’m not the only one who needs this song that can help us all serve a higher purpose, and tune into a more harmonious octave. ☉

**Reminder:** The Spiritual Journey email program resumes again on Monday, September 2. Here are some suggestions for continuing your study and practice during the summer break:

1. Review any emails, video excerpts or transcripts you found particularly helpful or you wish to take in again more deeply. Archives are on the CCH website (Happenings tab).
2. Choose an affirmation and/or a Work idea to guide you during this month.
3. Attend the Thursday Work class, the Saturday Scriptorium, or the Wednesday evening contemplative service.
4. If you are unable to attend, listen to a recording on the CCH website (Read & Listen tab).
5. If you would like support for your daily Centering Prayer practice and engagement in a contemplative community, check out [meditationchapel.org](http://meditationchapel.org).

**Reflection:** You are invited to review your original intention.

What you have been experiencing these past months since the beginning of our year-long, all-church journey together that integrates both legs of the church: contemplative Christianity and the Work of Inner Christianity? What movements are occurring within you?

How has participating in this journey and practicing Centering Prayer evoked a change in your sense of “I”?

“The world desperately needs people free of cultural illusions and who are undertaking a dedicated exploration of true reality. Not just to know the material nature of things, but also to know the very Source of everything that exists.”

Thomas Keating, *From The Mind to The Heart*

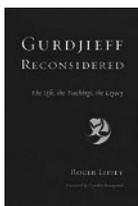
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# BOOK LOOK

## GURDJIEFF AND THE UNIVERSAL MONK

Two recently published books offer us a rich feast of inspiration and opportunity to deepen our understanding of two aspects of the foundations of our church community.



Roger Lipsey's extraordinary biographical explorations of the life of G.I. Gurdjieff is a much-anticipated new contribution to Gurdjieff scholarship, as well as a lay-person's re-telling of the overall sweep of Gurdjieff's life and teachings. If you wish to know more about the enigmatic man Gurdjieff, Lipsey's book is a valuable, current resource that will fill you with gratitude and curiosity for the legacy Gurdjieff has left the world.



Beverly Lanzetta's new book *The Monk Within: Embracing a Sacred Way of Life* is an extraordinary summation of the wisdom, history, practices and principles of the monastic way of life infused from an esoteric, contemplative perspective.

She is calling Christians and spiritual seekers alike to explore what she terms the way of the "universal monk." What is of particular importance in Lanzetta's work is her inclusion and emphasis on the theology of the mystical feminine and how this dimension of the feminine can shape a deepening spiritual journey. ☸

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### SUNDAY MESSAGE THEMES

August 4	Genesis 12:1-9	Faith Journey
August 11	Genesis 2:10-22	Wrestling God
August 18	Genesis 2:20-22	Waiting & Practice
August 25	Genesis 37, 45	Forgiveness & Family

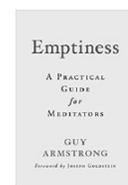
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## CCH BOOKSTORE AND LIBRARY

The Bookstore is a unique ministry offering contemplative titles and gifts.

The Library contains over 3000 books and videos. Reading and study within the library is encouraged; many items are available for check-out.

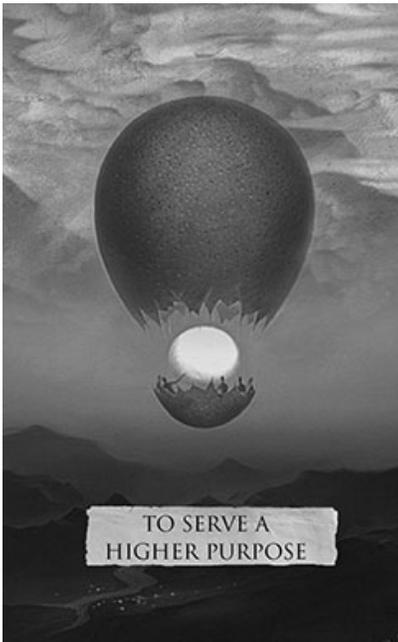
Bookstore and Library Hours  
Open Monday-Friday 9am-4pm  
Sunday 9:30-10am & 11:30am-noon



### JULY-AUGUST COMMUNITY READING

*Emptiness: A Practical Guide for Meditators* by Guy Armstrong

How can you live in the world without feeling trapped by it? Do we want to experience freedom as we live consciously in this world? Armstrong's writing style makes these difficult topics easy to understand and shows how one's meditation changes with continued practice. It includes excellent meditation exercises for practitioners at any stage. ☸



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*Whoever is in Christ is a new creation ...*

*behold, new things have come.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

## ANNUAL AIM: A NEW CREATION

TO SERVE A HIGHER PURPOSE BY TRACEY STEPHENS

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Gurdjieff repeatedly emphasized that the Work cannot be realized in isolation. The ultimate context can be called our world. This includes everything we can know and experience directly or indirectly, whether this be the events in our lives, a scientific paper on the structure of the galaxies, or an ancient tomb. The Work should enter into all of our experience, possible and actual, and give us a greater vision of the whole and our place in it. The greater part of the Work in regard to the world concerns understanding and to this there are no limits.

... The Work enables us to understand what is required of us, what it is to work and why there is an obligation to serve a higher purpose as consciously as we are able.

J. G. Bennett, *The Sevenfold Work*

For Christians, it is to be a kind of fifth Gospel: to become the word of God and to manifest God ... empty of self and full of God. ... We are not our own; we belong to everyone else.

Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition and The Mystery of Christ*

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As I contemplate what it means to serve a Higher Purpose and these ideas from the Work of Inner Christianity and Fr. Thomas Keating, I can see that my ultimate calling is to serve God with my entire being, from a place of unconditional love of God and all of

God's creation. It is to allow my life to unfold and align to the presence and action of the Spirit, so that the Divine can embody this individual, with these traits and these life circumstances and participate in the Evolution of Man.

But as I sit here, on a hot

afternoon, dealing with the tedious daily demands of parenting, work, household management...it all seems very esoteric and disconnected from the micro choices I make moment to moment. I continue to struggle in small ways, such as habits of small plans, worries, and

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controlling behaviors. However, as I look back, I can see how God has brought me experiences and influences that have enabled me to wish to serve a higher purpose. That wish has resulted in efforts, learnings, and observations that have enabled the Spirit to loosen the binds of my personality so that I can be more conscious to Think, Love, and Act.

A core teaching of the church that has served me in my self-knowledge and understanding is the Enneagram of personality types. My personality aligns to the type Six, which is characterized as “The Loyalist” with its chief drive to safety and security. All nine core types are aligned with a “sin” or personality pitfall. The sin of the Six is fear, which traditionally is not considered a sin per se and, in fact, sometimes perceived as a virtue. Fearful people are often masked as careful, prudent, wise, predictable, loyal, and hard-working. However, in my own experience, I can see how fear has been the underlying energy that drives a strong orientation to group approval (from which I derive a sense of safety), financial security and success. The cost of this energy is an avoidance of vulnerability, intimacy, and authenticity, as there is a deep reluctance to believe I am good, just as I am. I have failed more often than not in choosing love over fear, creating distance in my close relationships, before

remembering my aim to serve a higher purpose.

Richard Rohr, in *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*, brings the hazards of each of the personality types and their pitfalls into sharp focus:

“Our sins, in fact, are the other side of our gift. They are the way we get our energy. They ‘work’ for us.

“The Desert Fathers and the Sufis thought...that people are destroyed by their gifts and talents. We are destroyed by our gifts because we identify too closely with what we can do well... In the spiritual tradition we are warned in particular about ‘becoming attached.’ We cling too much to what comes our way naturally.”

As I look back at my youth and childhood, I can see how I quickly fixated on the gifts of my personality type. I was an “organizer” from an early age, much to my parents delight and embarrassment. I got incredible energy from organizing backyard plays, family Christmas pageants, surprise birthday parties, and softball teams. I always played the roles of orchestrator and instigator. I was oriented to a vision for what I wanted and bringing it to life, in a way that made me feel valued, included, and in control. I felt confident and was supported by a

loving family.

These natural passions went underground during my middle school years as I fell into deep self-loathing and doubt. I had imagined that teen life was going to be a series of special events – school dances, football games, parties, popularity with friends, and maybe even a boyfriend. A series of painful events quickly erased these wishes: a humiliating attempt at cheerleader tryouts, the discovery that I was very unathletic and awkward, the self-consciousness of braces and other changes in appearance left me feeling desperately unattractive. To make matters worse, my friend group fell apart and I felt socially isolated.

By my freshman year in high school, however, things started to change. I had to take some form of physical education as a mandatory credit, and the social norm at that time was that only “losers” took regular P.E. I signed up for cross-country and track as I figured that while I wasn’t able to catch a ball, I could surely put one foot in front of the other and run. I did okay my first year, but a desire formed in me to be the center of that group – one of the team leaders who was admired and respected. I started training hard in the off-season and much to my surprise made the Varsity team. Our team won state my sophomore year and that solidified my belief that I could

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if I work hard enough. This carried over into academics and personal relationships, as my new program for happiness seemed to work.

As a young adult, this strong drive and work orientation continued – my work team became the center of my social life and I was able to advance group acceptance and approval by being valued for my work contributions. I also married at a young age, wanting to have consistent, loving support and a “home base” of safety. My fear-based unconscious behaviors wanted the support and safety, but I was also afraid of too much closeness and intimacy.

Through my young adult years, I had a religious observance and participated in church groups and mission trips. I had some powerful moments of presence and knowing, but did not have a framework or language to articulate and understand these experiences. These experiences usually came through running and my time in silence and nature.

After five years of an all-out pursuit of career and social advancement, my life dramatically changed with the birth of my first child. I fell head-over-heels for this beautiful, amazing child. As she grew and we began to enjoy books, nature and playtime together, my values started to change and I lost

my drive and interest for work. My life became oriented to her and seeing the world through the eyes of a child. I also got to relive through her my favorite childhood experiences – Christmas morning, trick-or-treating, family vacations, and hot summer days at the pool.

Shortly after my twins were born, I was introduced by a friend to Centering Prayer and *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Fr. Keating. With these tools and a new yoga practice, I began to access a sense of peace that my anxiety-ridden mind had never fully experienced before. I remember after a yoga practice, lying in Savasana, I had what felt like a heart exploding experience of tremendous love and gratitude for my family. The emotion was so strong I had tears rolling down my cheeks, and that moment of Truth formed a key touchstone in my life around my decisions and priorities.

Soon after, I began looking for a Centering Prayer support group, which led me to The Church of Conscious Harmony. In 2004, when I first set foot on the CCH campus, I could feel a sense of sacredness and deep silence, and I was taken aback by the sheer beauty of the grounds and the integration of the buildings with nature. I could not really believe that this church existed. It was like finding something you always wanted, but had never been able to previously conceive.

For nearly 10 years, I raised my children, worked part-time and went deeper in the teachings and practices at CCH. Through the Work of Inner Christianity and the Enneagram, I learned about my false personality patterns, the pain and difficulties they created for myself and others, and that I could non-identify with those traits. And while I was growing in knowledge and felt a greater sense of freedom, I was still heavily under the influence of my programs for happiness. I can look back and see that my orientation to approval and success morphed into my spiritual practice, and there was a fixation around approval from ministers and teachers, and being involved in the church community through service and efforts. The same behaviors and patterns that previously drove my secular life were just repurposed to spiritual goals.

Life accelerated quickly in 2013 when I returned to the workforce full time, while my kids entered their teen years. Work felt like the experience of the Magician as described in the book *Meditations on the Tarot* – “concentration without effort.” I had no idea where a new-found power and energy came from, but I felt a tremendous clarity, knowing somehow what I needed to do or say in most situations without thinking. Of course I made plenty of errors, but the errors felt well placed for what I needed to learn



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about my personality pitfalls. Work success came easily and quickly as I was given more responsibilities and a bigger role. With each step into more responsibility, I felt a greater degree of fear and identification. The fixation shifted to not losing the faith and trust of my team. I often wish to retreat back to a simpler life, but the virtues of courage and faith continue to draw me back to bearing these work circumstances and my own limitations they reveal.

Meanwhile, I began experiencing many difficulties at home. It felt like my family was falling apart, and I was not there for them in the same way anymore. Some of the most difficult experiences of my life have occurred in these years of raising teenagers, and we are still in the midst of those difficulties.

### What have I learned?

These difficult years have served me in many ways as they have helped me continue to grow in understanding, humility, acceptance and being. As a Fr. Keating describes, I do feel a greater sense of freedom as I continue to more acutely feel my shortcomings and limitations.

One of the biggest lessons I have learned is that I am not "doing" anything. In my early years on the spiritual journey, I fell into the trap of unconsciously believing I was in control of my transformation,

and my self-perception would rise and fall around my ability to keep my aims. I now understand more deeply through the Work teachings that "man cannot do." This idea has graced me with relief and gratitude to God for God's unconditional love and acceptance, and has also helped me to become more real and accepting of others. I can see now that none of my accomplishments are due to any of my own effort; they are pure gifts of the moment of the Spirit and the graced circumstances of my life situation.

As a Six on the Enneagram, I will likely continue to bear the cross of my personality type and get my "juice" from approval seeking and self-protection behaviors. Experts say this is the most common energy type, and I am being asked to do my small part in working to redeem it for the love of God. My devotion grows as I accept these circumstances and my limitations and lean more and more in the knowing that God is my source, and my Higher Power is supporting me in courage and faith to take the next step. Instead of retreating from difficulties, I am asked to say "yes" – yes to my circumstances, to the weaknesses of myself and those around me, knowing we are all doing the best we can in playing our part consciously in the evolution of Man.

I am honored to be on this journey with all of you, as we serve our individual and collective growth in the One.

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

# LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

## THE SECOND LINE OF WORK

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**Work Idea:** The Work speaks of three different lines of work. The First Line, is work on oneself. The Second Line of the Work is work with others in the Work. The Third Line is work for the sake of the Work. *External considering* belongs to the Second Line of the Work. External considering is putting yourself in the position of your neighbor. In the New Testament it is called “love of neighbor.” In this way, the Second Line calls us to serve something higher than just our self. It calls us to serve our “neighbor.”

**Work Source:** “Understanding means that you understand the other person, who is the same as you – who is just like you – frightened, terrified, as perhaps you are. So understanding includes others, and not only yourself and your own interests. To understand another person – which is called External Considering – means

new connections in yourself. It is standing under your self-will and interests – stand under your False Personality. Yes – but in a real way, in a practical sense, in a Work-sense. He or she is as vulnerable to unhappy things said as you are. So we begin the Second Line of the Work. So I will end this Commentary with this idea – the idea of the Second Line of Work – work as regards one another. As this grows into our limited consciousness, so we *include more*. All *understanding* includes more – let us say, more than your own little selves. So some will ask: “Is what the Work means by understanding the same as increase of consciousness?” And the answer is: Of course, yes. But first you must by self-observation get rid of your phantasies and self-appreciation, etc. – which is the First Line of Work – and then begin to try to become conscious of other people’s difficulties – and

this is the Second Line of Work.” Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, Volume 4, p. 1270.

**Application:** Try to think what it means that an aim should have three forces in it, and what the three lines in the Work indicate. To work simply for other people and not on yourself is misguided. To work on yourself and regard other people as a nuisance is also misguided. And again, to work on yourself in connection with other people *without* thinking of the Work itself and what it needs misses the mark. Consider what this means for you – what does the Work need, from you, from us?

**Further Resource:** Remember what the Master said: *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.* (John 15:13). Likely, he was talking about one’s personality. ☺

# 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 appears in these pages each month.

## GUIDELINE 19

The building of our *new self* is bound to be marked by innumerable mistakes and sometimes by sin.

Such failures, however serious, are insignificant compared to the inviolable goodness of our true Self.

We should ask God's pardon,  
seek forgiveness from those we may have offended,  
and then act with renewed confidence and energy  
as if nothing had happened.

## UPCOMING CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT DAYS IN COMMUNITY

AT THE CHURCH OF CONSCIOUS HARMONY

Aug 10-11	Sat 8:30 am-4:00 pm & Sun 8:00 am-4:00 pm	\$100
Sept 21	9:00 am-4:00 pm	\$20
Oct 19	9:00 am-4:00 pm	\$20
Nov 16	9:00 am-4:00 pm	\$20
Dec 14	1:00-5:00 pm	\$10

One-day – please bring your own lunch.

Two-day commuter retreat – meals included.

Cost is a suggested love offering. Scholarships are available as needed.

## MULTI-DAY, OVERNIGHT AT CEDARBRAKE RETREAT & RENEWAL CENTER

Sep 13-18	6-day	\$595
Dec 6-12	7-day (wait list)	\$695

Double room prices. Single room is an additional \$10/night.

Please contact the CCH office or website to register.

## AUGUST CALENDAR

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

### SPECIAL EVENTS

2-Day Commuter Centering Prayer Retreat  
Aug 10 8:30am-4pm + Aug 11 8am-4pm  
Cost \$100 Preregister by Aug 6

### MONTHLY

1st Sundays

Bring non-perishables for Caritas

### WEEKLY

Sundays

Lectio Divina 8-9am

Prayer Circle 9:15-9:45am

Worship Service 10-11:30am

Youth Program 10-11:30am

Fellowship 11:30am

Wednesdays

Contemplative Communion Service 6-7pm

Thursdays 7:30-9pm

Work of Inner Christianity Class

Yin Yoga 6-7:15pm \$15

Preregister: [AwakenedHeartAustin@gmail.com](mailto:AwakenedHeartAustin@gmail.com)

Fridays

Yin Yoga 1-2:15pm \$15

Preregister: [AwakenedHeartAustin@gmail.com](mailto:AwakenedHeartAustin@gmail.com)

Saturdays

Scriptorium noon-12:50pm

### DAILY

Sunday-Saturday 7-7:35am

Centering Prayer Service, Theosis Chapel

Recordings of services are available  
through the Bookstore and online at  
[www.consciousharmony.org](http://www.consciousharmony.org)



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*All of us, gazing with unveiled face  
on the glory of the Lord,  
are becoming transformed  
into the same image  
from glory to glory.*

2 Corinthians 3:18

## THE TRANSFIGURATION

The Transfiguration reveals the basic pattern of the Christian path. Jesus, by his example and teaching, approaches from without in order to awaken us to his divine Presence within. The Eternal Word of God has always been speaking to us interiorly, but we have not been able to hear. When we are adequately prepared, the interior Word begins to be heard. The external word of Scripture and the interior Word arising from the depths of our being become one. Our inner experience is confirmed by what we hear in the liturgy and read in Scripture . . . Awakening to the divine Presence emerges from what Meister Eckhardt called 'the ground of being' – that level of being which in Christ is divine by nature and which in us is divine by participation.

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*