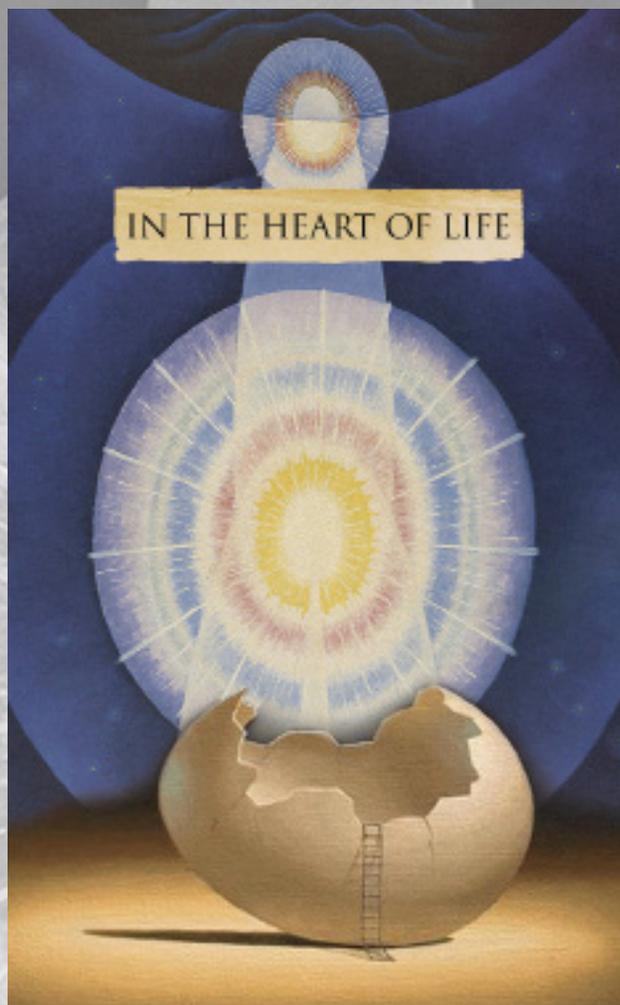


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THE MARK

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INWARD, OUTWARD, CENTERED

BY PETER HAAS

Take a moment to settle into your body and breath, and ask yourself, “What am I in, right now?” Observe what you are in.

Perhaps you are in love? In pain? In joy? In ecstasy? In trouble? In debt? In silence? In town? In bed? In a mood? In your body?

There are many different interior and exterior places and states of being, feeling and thinking we can be “in” at any given moment. It is wise and useful to self-observe and notice what we are in. It is a useful question that supports self-observation and non-identification.

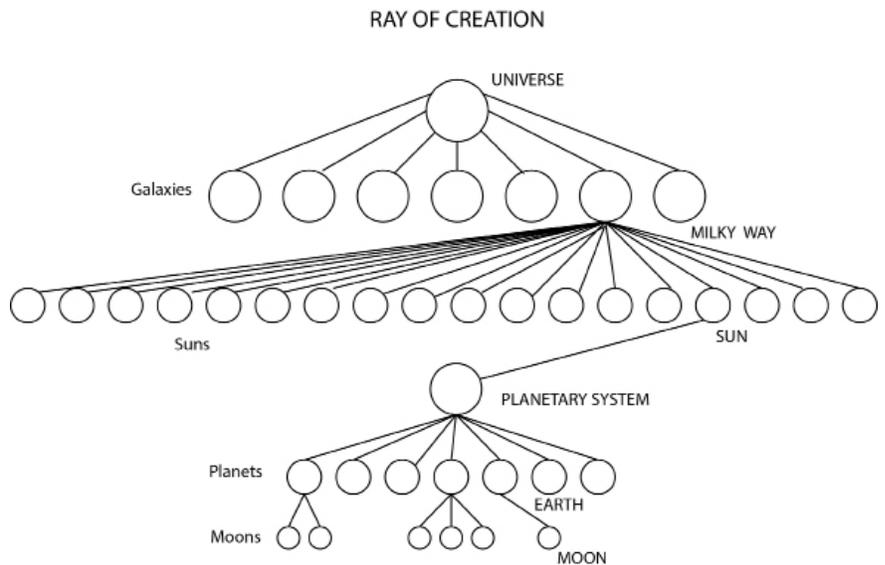
A famous example of this type of useful self-observation comes from Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*, which begins with a common mid-life moment:

“In the middle of the journey of life I came to myself within a dark wood where the way was lost. Ah, how hard a thing it is to tell what a wild, and rough, and stubborn wood this was,

which now as I remember it, renews the fear!”

With Dante, perhaps you feel lost in the woods of life. Or, perhaps you feel deeply found, grounded in love and flourishing in life’s goodness. Life has a way of ebbing

and flowing. We can live in the past or in the future. Living in stories about what has been or has not been. Stories about what might be or could be. Living in the past and living in the future are seductive, and from time to time, useful for the sake of gaining perspective, but



and flowing. We know that a hand plunged into the river of life never touches the same water twice. Life is flowing and we are always in a new moment, with untold new possibilities.

This points us to another dimension that we can be in. We can

the present moment is what we are always in, even as we think about the past or dream about the future.

The Work of Inner Christianity idea of The Ray of Creation teaches us much about the relativity of human perspective and the different dimensions we can be in

simultaneously. Think of the Ray of Creation as the universe, inter-dwelling, systems within systems, like a Russian nesting doll.

For example, I am currently nested in the Great Ray of Creation standing here in the Church's office, in Austin, in Texas, in the United States, in North America, in the planet earth, in earth's solar system, in the Milky Way galaxy, in our regional supercluster, in the universe, which is in the Great Mystery, which we name variously, God, Love, Mind, or even the Quantum Field of all possibilities.

Inwardness

The English preposition "in" is one of the most mystical words that comes to mind. Without this preposition, much of how we speak of Christian spirituality would be less clear. For example, consider these phrases:

My life is hidden with Christ in God. Colossians 3:3

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Romans 8:39

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was within God, and

the Word was God ... John 1:1

You are a temple of God, and the Holy Spirit dwells in you ... 1 Corinthians 3:16

The concept of inwardness was famously developed by Ralph Waldo Emerson whose conception of the spiritual life was based on three interrelated principles: inwardness, unity and right action. Inwardness to Emerson was "an awareness of and reverence for the unique processes of thought, perception, intuition, and emotional response that define our experience."

Similar to contemplative, inwardness is more than a spiritual adjective or boutique brand of Christianity. It is a universal invitation, the timeless draw of humankind toward an inwardness connected to an everywhere-ness. It is an inwardness grounded in a practical grace that frees and empowers us to both be and do from a deeper wholeness. Indeed, an inwardness formed with an authenticity and a strength that we may not otherwise experience on our own without stepping into a contemplative environment of silence, stillness and solitude.

I don't mean to suggest that all a human needs to do is turn inward to find God. It is more accurate to say that this is the inwardness of being in God's presence, versus the presence of God being in us. This allows us to acknowledge the mystery of our participation in the divine life and love – which is ultimately the mystery of the Trinity – without collapsing into the error of somehow thinking our experience of the divine presence within is containing or limiting God. Perhaps, this is what the Psalmist is seeking to convey with the soaring affirmation, *How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord... My soul longs, indeed faints for the courts of the Lord* (Psalm 84:1-2).

To be contemplative is to say yes to the inward presence and action of the Spirit of God. This inwardness helps us attend to the presence of love hidden in the present moment, and the ground of our being. Contemplation is, at its heart, a participation in the presence of love that births wisdom, kindness, mercy and understanding in us.

When words are needed to express the ineffable experience, it

is by their shape, intelligence and influence that we and others are helped to remember that which we and everyone already is: love. We become what we already are. We are born with love pre-installed.

The words merely point us toward a more profound awareness of the experience. Words, especially the long-ago-words of the saints and scriptures, invite us to personally plunge into the journey ourselves. Perhaps as we plunge, we often realize that we will never fully get the Mystery of God because the Mystery has already gotten us!

While the contemplative dimension of Christianity is activated by the grace of the Spirit of God, the contemplative dimension is also often accessed by a path of practices. These practices gently yet profoundly help us remember our deepest possibility, by leading us to what Jesus called “the one necessary thing” (Luke 10:42). Whatever else this one, essential is, it certainly intends to nurture in us our most real and developed life in Christ. In a word, by the Spirit of God, this one necessary dynamic, helps us flourish. We do so by consenting, by being still in the silence to the Reality of Its Presence.

The contemplative dimension of integral, inward union is a human birthright. It is the state of being

for which every human is created. This both demythologizes and democratizes the oft polarizing word contemplative and opens its meaning up to all sorts of inward, human experiences – from singing your infant to sleep with a lullaby in the quiet shade of the porch swing, to sitting in the stillness of an autumn forest attentively watching the empty space among the trees from a deer stand, completely present to the moment.

Yes, all of this and more is the contemplative way of being, indeed of being human. As we journey more deeply on the contemplative path into divine love and grace, we become the most real-I in relation to That Which Is Most Real.

Outwardness

The famous contrast between Mary and Martha that Jesus outlines in the Gospel of Luke, has often been mistakenly used to segment out the contemplative in contrast to the active. The essential point of the story is that inwardness and outwardness belong together. They supplement each other. Think of inwardness and outwardness as the base and treble clef of the symphony of our spiritual life.

In Jesus’ teaching to Martha, he uses the phrase “better part.” This is instructive not because it

qualifies the contemplative way as being the better part, instead it clearly acknowledges that the contemplative way is just one part of the whole – which is the union of the contemplative and active.

The incorporation of the contemplative dimension helps us see things differently. We are here to love the world as the world – as parts within the whole become more deeply aware of each other, as each other – embodied humans in the ever-evolving cosmos that is becoming love.

The key is remembering the deep interrelatedness of inward and outward, action and contemplation. This harmonization is a contemplative grace. The union of inwardness and outwardness is a healthy foundation for all life and ministry and is the safest place to enter the wounded world with the love of Christ and the justice of mercy. A union cultivated by consenting more and more to the Center, to which we now turn.

Centeredness

The word most commonly used in the Christian tradition to describe contemplation is the word meditation, from the Latin *meditare*. The root *stare in medio* means “to remain in the center.” The word contemplation suggests

the same. Experientially, the temple is our heart, the depth and center of our being. Contemplation is the gift of being with God in our heart, beyond words and engagement with thoughts, in the grace of silent stillness.

Although often used as synonyms in current culture, there were deep and unique distinctions in how the words meditation and contemplation were used centuries ago, especially between different traditions in the East and West. In our common usage today, neither the word meditation nor the word contemplation is about philosophical or speculative thinking. At the most, we might say something like, “Let me meditate on that,” or “I’ll contemplate my options.” But these phrases are clearly understood to be referring to a kind of intellectual pondering and not referring to silent, wordless prayer. One anonymous author of the spiritual life brilliantly describes the process from concentration to meditation to contemplation like this:

“Meditation is therefore the honest and courageous effort of the ‘lower self’ to think together with the ‘higher self’ in divine light. And just as concentration necessarily precedes meditation, so does

the latter lead sooner or later to contemplation, i.e. a transition is made from consideration and discourse to the immobility and complete silence of supernatural communion, where one no longer thinks something from a distance, but where this Thing itself is present and reveals itself. Contemplation is the union of the thinker with reality. Here one does not arrive at a ‘conclusion’, but one receives – or undergoes – the imprint of Reality.”

Beyond etymological origins, both meditation and contemplation have less to do with rational thinking (philosophical or otherwise), and everything to do with the intuitive experience of knowing and being known by Love in silence. Simply, contemplation is the ever-deepening awareness and perception of God as our center amidst life.

Again, take a moment to settle into your body, breath, and ask yourself, “What am I in, right now?” Observe.

Thankfully, beyond words, doctrines and definitions, each of our spiritual journeys is evolving and unfolding in the heart of life – inward, outward and centered. ☉



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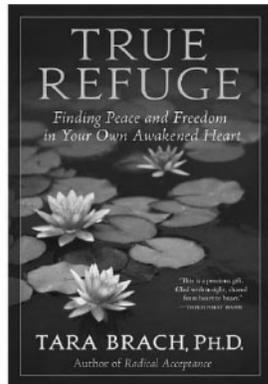
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BOOK LOOK



Tara Brach's *True Refuge* is a wise, heartfelt, and deeply practical book for anyone wishing for new inspiration for growing deeper in understanding the spiritual journey psychologically and integrating a meditative prayer practice more deeply into day-to-day life difficulties, relationships and emotions.

Of particular note is Brach's development of the process she calls RAIN, which is an acronym representing a four-fold process:

- Recognize** what is happening
- Allow** life to be just as it is
- Investigate** inner experience with kindness
- Non-identify**

Perhaps the first three steps of the RAIN process are in essence what the Work of Inner Christianity envisions with the experience of Self-Observation. RAIN expands and deepens what we mean by Self-Observation, especially non-critical Self-Observation.

Another significant and practical take away this book offers are profoundly effective meditation scripts at the conclusion of each chapter to help the reader integrate the knowledge and ideas discussed, taking the ideas deeper into the silence of meditative prayer. ☸

OCTOBER TEACHING SERIES

Lessons in Creating:
Practical Tools for a Skillful Life

October 6
Fears & Hurts

October 13
Manifestation

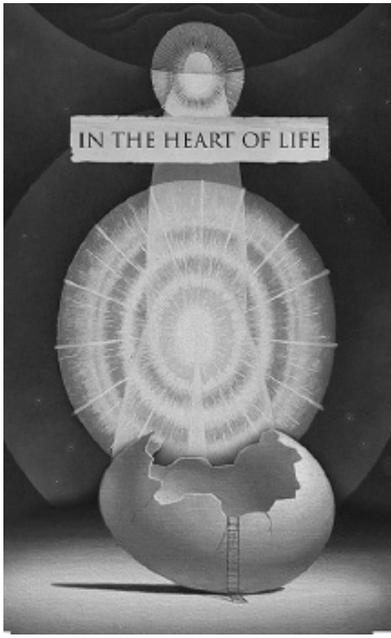
October 20
Co-Creators

October 27
Abundance & Giving

COMMUNITY READING SEP-OCT

*Bringing Your Shadow
Out of the Dark*
Breaking Free from the Hidden
Forces That Drive You
by Robert A. Masters, PhD

Masters illuminates the process of meeting our shadow in beneficial ways and how to live a more complete experience of who we are.



Whoever is in Christ is a new creation ...

behold, new things have come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

ANNUAL AIM: A NEW CREATION

IN THE HEART OF LIFE

BY CATHERINE KUCHAR

There is an absolute Divine Love at the heart of life,
a wholeness of Love completely centered, irresistible, and attractive.

This Love is the life force of unity and deeply vested in what life becomes.

To wake up to this Divine Other at the heart of life is to admit that reality is relational;
nature is relational and we are relational because love is relational and God is Love.

As the mystic travels into the inner universe through the stages of consciousness,
the separation between self and God wears away so that at the highest stage of luminous darkness,
there is one conscious unified reality, grounded in love.

Ilia Delio, A Hunger for Wholeness

Divine love is compassionate, tender, luminous, totally self-giving, seeking no reward, unifying everything.

Thomas Keating, Open Mind, Open Heart

What Is in the Heart of Life?

That is a Big question. There is a part of me that answers “that’s easy...family, friends, happiness, rainbows, butterflies...” and there is another part of me that answers “that’s tough.” When I sink into

the “that’s tough” part, my heart gets heavy. There is a silence that washes over. There is a bodily sensation of fear, almost a tremor. It is as if I intuitively know there is something much Bigger in the heart of life. It is not just

cartoon hearts, careers, social escalation and the mechanical growth of this human life. There is something that deserves reverence – something that has a massive influence over me. What is it?

Why do I feel under authority

to this “thing?” Why do I feel lighthearted when I look at this question at a surface-level glance, and then get heavy when I truly sink into it? There is a part of me that is scared. Scared to look at the light, to let go of my unconscious behaviors, to let go of control and look truthfully at what is in the Heart of Life. At the same time, there is a part of me that drops my arms, opens my heart, closes my eyes and says:

I surrender.

I’m ready.

I want to joyfully receive what is in the Heart of Life.

I want to know, understand and experience the truth.

Love

Love has been my favorite mantra for as long as I can remember. It is what I crave and I know it is what my heart desires. Yet it is one of the things that scares me the most. It is extremely hard for me to receive and there are times when I am resistant to giving it. Through the teaching of the Work of Inner Christianity I know the resistance to give and receive love is “second force.” Second force is what creeps in and prevents me from experiencing the Heart of Life that God graciously gives us.

I think of a quote from Joseph Campbell: “The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure that you seek.” The love I am scared to receive, the love I resist to give, is the treasure (the love) I seek. I am learning to dance with these emotions I observe. I have a personality type that wants to fight and/or deny them, and I have done it for a long time. When I fight and deny, both become more difficult. I get further and further away from my aim. It’s almost as if giving and receiving love is out of the question.

However, when I surrender, I observe and embrace that these thoughts and emotions are not me, and I remember who I truly am, things become lighter. My heart opens. Suddenly, receiving love sounds really nice. Giving love sounds like a delight. My true self joyfully receives Love. My true self freely gives Love.

Embracing the human condition and remembering who I am brings me to wholeness. It allows me to connect and experience in the Heart of Life.

More Questions

I grew up believing God and I were separate. God was a big, old, smiley man in the sky. I was a little sinner on earth that had

millions of miles of separation from God. It was never a thought that God was anywhere except in the golden gates of heaven high above. If I was “good” enough, I would get to meet him after I passed from this life. Meanwhile, I needed to “earn” God’s love.

By the grace of God, I connected with The Church of Conscious Harmony three years ago and all parts of me, physical, mental and emotional, started to shift. God was, and is, present and working in every ounce of this community, and everywhere else for that matter. Without my doing, and almost without my knowing, I have started to experience moments where God is living in me. This has been a slow and not-so-easy process. I feel I am at the infantile beginnings of it. I continue to ponder:

Could God be in the Heart of Life?

Is God the Heart of Life?

If God is in the Heart of Life, what is God?

Is the childhood belief of separation from God what provokes the heaviness in my heart when I sink into the question: “What is in the heart of life?”

Is it these old beliefs that are keeping me trapped in fear?

Is it the waking up to the

misbelief of what I have thought of as me my whole life?

I never would have asked these questions a few years ago. The struggle between the Truth that God and I are connected, that I have a basic core of goodness, that divine Love is at the heart of life, and the mind's desire to hold on to the misbeliefs and go with what our culture teaches is a real thing. I would say it is almost physically painful. It is a battlefield.

This quote from Ilia Delio strikes an interior chord: "As the mystic travels into the inner universe through the stage of consciousness, the separation between self and God wears away so that at the highest stage of luminous darkness, there is one conscious unified reality, grounded in love." The separation between self and God wears away. There is one conscious unified reality, grounded in love. That's it (for me). In the Heart of Life is unification. No separation exists. Divine love abounds in and through all.

Intention

I have learned when I stay dedicated to my Centering Prayer time, when I get fed by the Work of Inner Christianity, when I stay in community, when I partake

in the Eucharist, when I truly Work with my Work partner and I sink into the truth that there is no separation, I can fight a good fight. The heaviness lifts. The fear and tremor-like bodily sensation evaporates and I am able to let go. I am able to release and allow God's will to be done.

It's when I'm out of my body when the mind takes the driver seat. When I am taking in influences created by this world is when I am being controlled by my head and asleep.

This Heart of Life that we are

talking about is much different than the one I have known and our world teaches. It is one I find hard to describe with words. It is one that is free, one that is authentic, one that radiates and has no boundaries, one that I feel God intended for all of us to experience.

I wish to remember what is truly in the heart of life, to give thanks for this beautiful experience, and to peacefully surrender, with childlike amazement, to the Divine Love and Unity that is. 

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 21

Progress in the spiritual journey
is manifested by the unconditional acceptance
of other people,
beginning with those with whom we live.

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

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

LIFE IN THE HEART OF THE RAY OF CREATION

Work Idea: When the Work explains the relationship of the Absolute to the cosmos and the cosmos to humanity it speaks of the Ray of Creation. It states that the Ray of Creation can be applied to all of creation – both the micro and the macro. Externally, the Ray of Creation begins with the Absolute, and moves downward to All Possible Worlds, next Our Galaxy (Milky Way), our Sun, the Planets, the Earth and finally the Moon. The Ray is also illuminating to everything internal, deeper and psychological to humanity. Upon further study one is able to relate it to the internal processes and stages that happen as they engage in the Work on their way to becoming more conscious human beings. Further, we are able to look to the model of the Ray of Creation to determine our relationship to the Absolute, galaxies, the Sun and even the Moon. The Ray illustrates how people have been born with the possibility to either continue living

amongst the plants and the beasts or to ascend to the Sun. It shows the ladder that has been spoken about so many times across so many cultures. It speaks of an evolving universe as opposed to the current more traditional view of a dying universe. The Ray of Creation also tells of ascending, descending and side octaves, it speaks of greater numbers of laws; it speaks of coarser and finer energies, but these ideas are not for this brief description of the Ray.

Work Source: “We must now view the visible Universe from the standpoint of the Principle of the Ray of Creation. We know that the visible Universe in its greatest magnitude is made up of a vast number of immense star systems of which the Milky Way is one. We must conceive that the first act of Creation is comparable with making a general tenuous formation of all possible systems which are filled in by increasing

condensation. This we call World 3: ‘All possible systems of worlds.’ Since we wish to find the position of our Earth in creation, we will take next our system of worlds which has separated from the primal mass – namely, our Starry Galaxy or Milky Way: World 6. Out of this we will take our Solar System or Sun: World 12. The Planetary mass formed from the Sun will then be World 24 of which we take our separated Planet or Earth (World 48) from which our Moon is derived (World 96). This is *our* Ray of Creation. Our Moon is the terminal point of that branch of the total tree of the Universe in which our Earth appears. But as you will notice so far there is no appearance of Man in the Ray. The whole Ray is evolving. Every part of it seeks to rise higher in the scale of creation. The Moon is not a dead planet, but the youngest point in our Ray.” Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, Volume 1, 118.

Application: Did you know there are 8 planets in our solar

UPCOMING CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS
AT THE CHURCH OF CONSCIOUS HARMONY

Nov 16	9:00 am-4:00 pm	\$20
Dec 14	1:00-5:00 pm	\$10

One-day – please bring your own lunch.
Cost is a suggested love offering. Scholarships are available as needed.

2020-2021

CENTERING PRAYER MULTI-DAY, OVERNIGHT RETREATS
AT CEDARBRAKE RETREAT & RENEWAL CENTER

2020

Jan 24-28	5-day	
Mar 6-15	10-day	Lenten
Jul 24-29	6-day	
Sep 11-16	6-day	Jim Reale, Vestibules
Dec 4-10	7-day	Advent

2021

Jan 22-26	5-day	
Mar 26-Apr 4	10-day	Lenten
Jul 23-28	6-day	
Sep 10-15	6-day	
Dec 3-9	7-day	Advent

Please contact the CCH office to reserve a space.
512-347-9673

system spinning around our sun? Can you imagine that there are over 1,000,000,000 suns in the Milky Way Galaxy? The Milky Way Galaxy is part of a galaxy group called the Local Group that contains around 54 galaxies. The Local Group is part of a mass of concentrations of galaxies called the Virgo Supercluster which contains around 100 local galaxy groups. The Virgo Supercluster is one of about 10,000,000 superclusters in

the observable universe.

If you added up every grain of sand on every beach in our world, it wouldn't match the number of stars in the observable universe. *Imagine that.*

Further Resource: Search "Laniakea Supercluster" in Wikipedia. Read these commentaries by Maurice Nicoll to shine more light on the Ray on pages 837, 1410, and 238. 

OCTOBER CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

New Member Classes - Wednesdays
Oct 2-23 7:30-8:45pm Register with church office

Womens Gathering Oct 5 4-10pm
Register with church office

Introduction to Centering Prayer Class
Oct 12, 9am-noon w/ 6 follow-up classes on Mondays starting Oct 14 7:30-8:30pm
Register with church office. \$35

Gurjieff Music Oct 29 7:30pm
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

Wednesdays
Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm
Contemplative Communion Service 6:30-7:15pm

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

Fridays
Yin Yoga 1-2:15pm \$15
Preregister: AwakenedHeartAustin@gmail.com

Saturdays
Scriptorium 11-11:50am
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



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*Blessed are they who hunger and
thirst for holiness;
they shall have their fill.*

Matthew 5:6

ORDINARY TIME

The primary sacrament of Christianity is Jesus Himself.

A sacrament is a visible sign of the invisible presence of grace; it communicates and transmits what it signifies. Jesus transmitted what He signified, divine love, by His teaching and example.

... After Jesus, the greatest sacrament is another human being.

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

