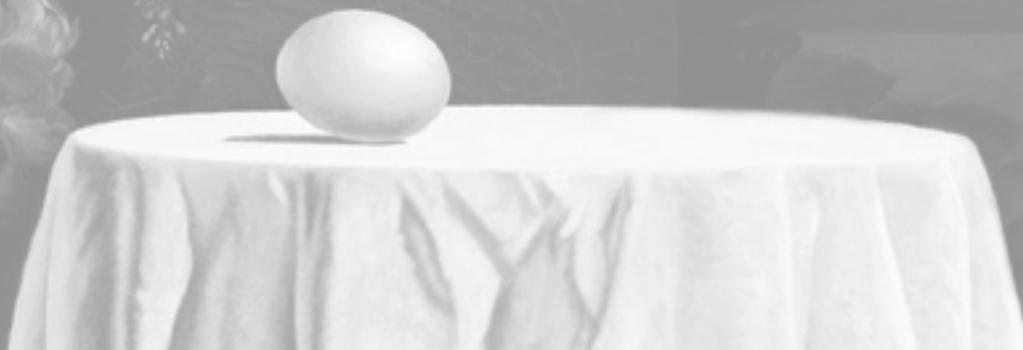


November 2019
Volume 31
Number 11



THE MARK

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



AT THE HEART OF CONSECRATION IS A YES

BY PETER HAAS

The English word consecrate comes from the Latin *consacrare*, which literally means to do something with devotion or dedication. That suggests that anything we do with dedication or devotion is an expression of the consecrated life.

When I think of consecration, I think of vows, the word Yes, and the phrase *My Yes Is Yours*. I'm inspired by Mary's response to the Angel's visitation (Luke 1:38). There, the Angel invited Mary (and through her, us) to a deeper experience of God as a literal vessel for the birthing of Christ into the world. Her response, now so famous, was something like, "Yes, let it be in me as you say." That reminds me of the wisdom saying, "Don't forget that the drop can know that it is in the ocean, but rarely does it realize that the entire ocean is contained in the drop." It's the presence and action of the Holy Spirit that makes this miracle of Christ-consecration possible.

On a deeper level, even Mary's

Yes was grounded in God's grace, drawing her into the energy of acceptance versus resistance. Like Mary, without this grace acting in our lives, not a single Yes of consecration would endure or come to fruition. In this way, every Yes is really God's. Not only is each and every Yes inspired by God's grace, it is also offered to God.

Thus, we can authentically say in the depth of prayerful intercession or silent contemplation, "My God, my God, my Yes is Yours." Truly, giving our Yes to God is just another way of summing up the heart of the consecrated pattern of life revealed by Christ: *not my will, but Thy will be done*.

Yes. Three letters, one little word with infinite potential. Throughout a lifetime, our journey into God is a journey into Yes – learning and cultivating a disposition of feeling a Yes to life. Paradoxically, we may and often discover the personal power of Yes as we feel into the powerlessness of all the times we have encountered a No. We are

surrounded by and perhaps even shaped by these confrontations of No.

No to God.

No to health.

No to love.

No to life.

No to others.

No to healing.

No to abundance.

No to giving.

No to forgiveness.

That is all the more reason to anticipate and welcome the quickening light of Christ, to awaken from this energized state of resistance. May we begin to recognize that for every No we have received in life, we may also declare and participate in its transformation into a Yes – for our ultimate good and ongoing growth. And so we declare:

Yes to God.

Yes to being you.

Yes to the past, present and future.

Yes to hope.

Yes to faith.

Yes to love.

Yes to others, especially those we
live and work with.
Yes to flourishing.
Yes to surrender.
Yes to giving.
Yes to receiving.
Yes to forgiveness.
Yes even to our life difficulties.
Yes – whether simply, quietly or
loudly – just yes.

The word Yes, and even the more casual Yeah, Yep, and Uh-Huh, doesn't convey neutrality. It is meant to convey a movement of the will toward something or someone. When it comes to our spiritual journey deeper into the love of God, Mary's consent becomes a template for our own inner Yes to become more than just a well-developed self. We are invited to *also* become empty of self so that Christ might be formed in each of us (Galatians 4:19). While it's nearly impossible to describe what encompasses a person's "self," we certainly can begin to feel our self-contraction in fear and an expansion in love in

this invitation.

Perhaps the "self" is what we think defines us in the world; but actually, it's just one dimension of our being. Never forget that our self and its many variations are all loved by God. God loves us so much that God desires to bloom us open beyond our self into Christ – a union of our unique and personal human nature with the universal divine nature.

In the process, we are opened to God by wisdom and word, silence and sacrament, beauty and wilderness, giving and sharing, and a million other encounters on the journey of being an embodied human on earth in this cosmos. We are invited to surrender and trust, which is often the toughest part. Why? Because we spend a lot of interior energy resisting Grace and saying "No" to Wisdom and God's Word. It is much easier to do our own thing and be our own self. When we do say Yes, we receive the gift of interior growth, integrating the old into the new, and the divine

into the human. Probably not all at once, but certainly in time, through the seasons, we discover with St. Paul that it is *no longer just I, but also Christ in me* (Galatians 2:20).

We bear fruit. We bless others. All this from a simple Yes.

Simple, but not easy as life has a way of closing us down and closing our interior spiritual sight. It's not that we want to be closed to God, or want to say No to God. It's just that we tend to be open to so much else in our daily movement that there is often little energy, time and most of all, *attention* for anything else except the urgent – and when we are honest, for most of us God or our spiritual journey is not that urgent. Diapers. Taxes. Telephone calls. TV. That stuff is urgent, or so we think. What ends up happening is that we live on a diet of urgency and realize that it leads to a need to purge the urgent and take a Sabbath or prayer retreat. Life situations seemingly conspire to bring tailor-made experiences to reveal our need for spiritual growth and show us the

places where God wishes to heal us, where we are invited to dedicate or consecrate even these tender points of inner Work to God.

Learning how to say Yes to whatever is occurring in our life without needing to change or resist anything is the art of grace – a grace that also teaches us the skills of hope, faith and love. Skills, along with grace, that we will need to acquire more completely as we continue on the spiritual journey. Yes is another way of practicing the Welcome Prayer. Opening, consenting, allowing, surrendering, welcoming. All of these energetic dispositions can be cultivated by way of practice, whether it's returning to the sacred word in Centering Prayer or the letting go of desires and acceptance of the present moment in the Welcome Prayer.

Saying Yes to God is a journey of ongoing openings – opening our hearts and minds to the love of God by resting in the silence, opening up by the light of the Spirit of God in word, sacrament, wilderness and prayer, to name a few. Taking rest in solitude and silence is so essential and life-giving for our spiritual health and interior soul-care, it detoxifies us of

our busy, noisy, distracted way of life. During an extended meditative prayer retreat, we are given ample opportunity to see our self more clearly and discover what more of our self we can give to God. We also can see our resistance to open or be opened by God's love. That is a temporary restriction and can be managed generally by waiting it out; just don't leave the retreat or the prayer time altogether. If the resistance lasts longer than a couple of hours, that might be a good indication to talk to a spiritual director, pastor or friend about what you are experiencing.

In scripture, we see the grace of God played out in the ministry of Jesus the Christ revealed in the many healing stories recorded in the Gospels. Through these stories, I'm reminded that even when I am distracted and going about my journey, there might be a miracle hiding in the surprise of the next moment and in the chaos of my normal life. While I cherish setting sacred time aside to be still and retreat, the truth is God is ready to open us up equally out there in the activity of life and in here in the stillness. Consecration is everywhere. And can occur anytime, to anyone. 



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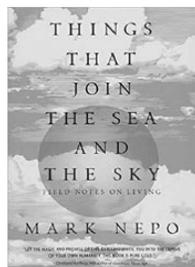
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BOOK LOOK



Inspired by Mark Nepo's own journal writing over 15 years, *Things that Join the Sea and Sky* is a deeply personal and insightful book on the inner process of transformation. This book is designed in a very readable format, like a daily reader, with short

reflections that uniquely connect the reader with Essence.

Among the many gifts of Nepo's writings, one of the most enduring is his witness to the experience of deep self-observation with unrelenting honesty and kindness.

The book explores enriching themes such as: our fear beyond what goes wrong, the gift of deepening, the practice of relationship, burning off what is unnecessary, and how we make our way. As an example, here's a line from a reflection entitled "Short Wisdom on a Long Planet":

"We keep turning one thing into another calling it progress ... We keep burrowing into everything but ourselves ... We keep eating our way through the arms of the Universe, desperate for something large and quiet to hold us." 

NOVEMBER TEACHING SERIES

November 3

Vision Casting: The Journey Experiment

November 10

Vision Casting: The Journey School

November 17

Vision Casting: The Journey Group

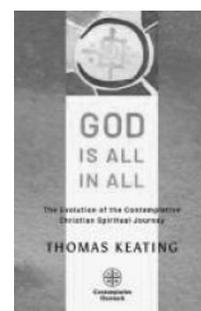
November 24

Remembering: Gratitude for our Church Founders & History

COMMUNITY READING

NOV - DEC

God is All in All



*The Evolution of the
Contemplative Christian
Spiritual Journey*

by Thomas Keating

Please join in community as we share in this beautifully edited and presented book of Fr. Thomas' inner wisdom on the infinite compassion and the mercy of God; the three stages of the transformational spiritual journey; the new cosmology, human nature, science and their relationship to spirituality; the message of the cross for our times; the meaning of redemption; and more in this recently released book. 



Whoever is in Christ is a new creation ...

behold, new things have come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

ANNUAL AIM: A NEW CREATION

A CONSECRATED LIFE

BY ANITA SCHORI

A consecrated life is not, then, something to which the soul can attain even by the most steadfast and devoted action of the dedicated will.

It is something which we cannot achieve by our own efforts, and yet for which we were made. The secret Eucharistic action brings us, through self-offering to God and self-spending for men, to adoring joy, to a humble and grateful memorial of the saving action of God – and thence by the operation of the Spirit to an entire transformation in him.

It does not follow that this transforming action is perceptible to that which is transformed.

The formula of real abandonment is not “Leave all, so that something may happen, some spiritual reward be gained.” There is a full stop after “all.”

Evelyn Underhill, “The Mystery of Sacrifice,” *Radiance*

What does it mean to leave all? I have been pondering this question anew ever since I read this month’s quote on a consecrated life. In a psychology class during my college years, I remember learning that as human beings, we have two basic needs: love and generativity. While I have not been asked to give up either in itself, I can see how my struggles in these two areas over the course of my journey

thus far have brought me, by God’s grace, ever closer to a kind of life Evelyn Underhill seems to be describing in her quote. In short, I have been asked to leave all I knew and understood about love and generativity when I sat in that class in my early twenties.

Growing up in a rural, protestant community in Switzerland, I came of age understanding love as marriage

and generativity as having children. While my grandmother suggested I marry a farmer in the mountains, I had a strong desire to pursue my education. I came to the United States in my early twenties and soon settled in Austin to learn English and begin my studies. Of course, everything was new and foreign to me and little made sense. The culture shock was severe and I am still very grateful to the

many kind and generous people who helped me during this time. I also fell in love – or so I thought at the time. It was a painful and, thank God, brief relationship that turned out to be the catalyst for getting me started in earnest on my spiritual journey.

Taking responsibility for my choices, I began to look at my own issues. I soon found myself in Al-Anon. As an adult granddaughter of an alcoholic who died just a few months before I was born, I explored how this disease impacted not just my recent choices, but my entire life and family for generations. I also joined the Unity Church. Tim and Barbara Cook had just left and it would be another ten years before I would meet them. I loved the minister though, and appreciated how her teachings complemented my 12-Step work. Both became important parts of my support and, at the same time, offered opportunities to serve others. I enjoyed leading 12-Step meetings and staffing the hot-line. Moving away from Austin, I discovered a small Unity church and served on the board for several years with a wonderful group of friends. In these relationships and activities, I had begun, although largely unconsciously, to discover a new face of love and generativity.

Marriage and children was still very much my program for happiness and, with my education

completed, that became my focus. I married a kind and wonderful man. My biological clock was ticking and I was obsessed with having children. Everything around starting a family turned out to be a struggle. I was impatient to get pregnant and the longer it took, the more of a project it became. When I finally got pregnant, it turned out to be an ectopic pregnancy – then a miscarriage – and then another. It was more loss than our relationship could bear. It was only much later that I learned how differently each person grieves and how important it is for both partners to be supported by a loving community during such difficult times.

I moved back to Austin and found The Church of Conscious Harmony on Steck Avenue. Centering Prayer was an instant connection. My broken heart finally found a home. It was love at first sight. Twenty minutes showed up twice a day and it was my rock, my anchor. I participated in the Introduction to Centering Prayer class and the group continued to meet for about two years, deciding every six video tapes whether or not to continue meeting until we watched the whole series. I made many retreats and read ferociously. Jacob Needleman's *Lost Christianity* formed my faith in a particularly powerful way. My loving relationship with God grew as I learned more about my faith.

One thing that I am particularly grateful for is that CCH introduced me to many people who publicly consecrated their lives to God. Beginning with Fr. Thomas Keating, OCSO and all his brothers at St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, but also Fr. Carl Arico and many other priests who either visited CCH or led retreats offered by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. While all the visions for my life included motherhood, these people had chosen a different life – they had vowed to not have children, to live generativity in a different way, a way yet foreign to me.

I was devastated when children did not come. I had no idea how to live a fruitful life, a life-giving life without a family. Almost twenty years ago now, I was taking my confusion and pain to a Contemplative Outreach Centering Prayer retreat near St Louis. It was held at a Franciscan retreat center and the retreat was led by Fr. Bill Sheehan, an Oblate priest. We were reading the gospel of Matthew. When I heard, *Some are incapable of marriage because they were born so; some, because they were made so by others; some, because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.* (Matt 19:12), my life was truly changed. I realized that some people, particularly those mentioned above and others who

live in a consecrated life, were not having children by choice in order to live generativity in another way. It gave me hope and at the same time, Mass really became alive for me. I even stayed after the retreat to participate in Mass at the chapel with the Franciscan community and it was beautiful!

I came back to Austin and quickly located a Catholic church and the next day I went to Mass. The following day, I called the office to find out how one becomes Catholic. I was connected with the head of that program and learned that a class for new members was starting in a couple of weeks. “Just come as you are,” I remember her saying. I had made several Centering Prayer retreats with the pastor and I was absolutely certain that this was the right thing for me to do. So, my journey moved me from CCH to becoming a member of the Catholic Church. In the Mass, I discovered a new way to consecrate myself to love and generativity.

I remained faithful to my practice and continued my involvement with Contemplative Outreach, especially when a move took me away from Austin and the support and community I had enjoyed. I enrolled in a study course of Christian Mysticism that was offered through Contemplative Outreach at that time and one of the monks at

Snowmass became my mentor. I was glad to have community and support while I was settling in my new place. It was virgin territory in terms of Centering Prayer and I quickly realized that if I wanted support, it was going to be up to me. So, I did the formation classes, started a Centering Prayer chapter, sharing the gift of prayer with others. Many retreat centers belonged to religious orders and I loved getting to know even more people who had chosen a celibate life. I quizzed them about how they lived generativity in their particular state while at the same time savoring the fruitfulness in my Centering Prayer work and vocation as a teacher.

I continued my exploration of religious life and went back to school for advanced studies in pastoral ministry and theology. After visiting with several religious orders, I entered with the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament and spent three years with them. During one of these years, the Catholic Church celebrated the Year of Consecrated Life. I consider it a special grace that, even though consecrated life did not turn out to be my life-long vocational state, I got to participate in this celebration to “wake up the world” with a testimony of faith, holiness and hope. There was a song composed for the occasion called “Wake the World with

Dawning Joy” by Steven Warner (available on wlpmusic.com) that I think speaks to all of us – to live in God’s love incarnate!

After living with the sisters and moving back to Austin, I realized that, while my parish is serving me well in many ways, it does not meet my need and desire for community. I missed my friends and the intimate sharing in the small groups. Somehow, by God’s grace, I found my way back to CCH. I love the people here and appreciate that no matter who I am sitting with, a wonderful and meaningful dialogue is bound to blossom.

So, what have I learned from my experiences? While they are uniquely mine, I think the lessons are much more universal. For me, it is still about love and generativity and I agree with Evelyn Underhill that it is God who teaches us to grow in these areas through our experiences. The Eucharist, as a ritual of consecration, plays a key role here as it fosters my growth in both of these areas ever anew. I have come to learn that, no matter what the vocation, or state in life or even the particular experiences – life is much more complicated than what meets the eye. It is, and can only be, a God thing! Thus, humility, gratitude and joyful adoration of our God and all of God’s creation are indeed our proper responses. ☪

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

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

CONSECRATED CONSCIOUSNESS BY NATHAN JONES

Work Idea: The Work teaches we are not properly conscious. The ultimate aim of this system is to increase consciousness. Through observing oneself, we can begin to gain more knowledge of ourselves. The application of this knowledge to our understanding of oneself begins the *process* of increasing our consciousness. This *process* that we begin, that we continue, that we pray for, learn and yearn for, is part and parcel of the consecrated life.

Work Source: “In assembling the different parts of the Work to form an instrument in the mind for the reception of finer vibrations continually coming from the two Higher Centers that are present in people, the idea that we are not properly conscious is one of the main supporting parts of the framework of this instrument. In other words, it has to be more and more realized by experience that one is not by any means properly

conscious and that other people are not. This changes one considerably. But unless it becomes a truth of experience it cannot take its necessary place in the instrument.” Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, Vol. 5, 1522.

Application: Often when in the company of others, we have an internal voice, a dialogue which runs inside while we socialize and smile externally. It can be concerning the person’s dress, the subject or manner of their speech, their teeth or family history to name a few examples. Catch this internal monologue and simply remind yourself that this individual is both a child of God and not fully conscious, *just like yourself*. Then internally thank them for this reminder.

Further Resource: Read to the point of mechanicalness the following words. It is striking to see where it might land.

“And I bow my knees to The Father of Our Lord Yeshua The Messiah, The One from whom every Person is named, that is in Heaven and in Earth, That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be confirmed by power in his Spirit, that in your inner person, The Messiah may dwell by faith, and in your hearts by love, when your root and your foundation shall be confirmed, That you can discover with all the holy, what is the height and depth and length and breadth, And you may know the magnitude of the knowledge of the love of The Messiah and you may be filled in all the fullness of God. But to the person who is more than almighty to do for us and is greater than what we ask or imagine, according to His power that is active in us, To that person be glory by their church in Yeshua The Messiah to all generations of the eternity of eternities. Amen.”
Ephesians 3.14-21 

MEN'S WINTER SOLSTICE FIRE CIRCLE

Fellow brothers of The Church of Conscious Harmony, please join us for a sacred ceremony on December 21, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. We will gather on this Winter Solstice eve as brothers in Christ in whom there is neither male nor female, with an Aim to learn more about the power of fear and how we can navigate through fear as conscious men. Like Joseph, the husband of Mary, mother of Jesus, we will confront our fears with the gift of

faith. We will explore what it means to live a life of consent to being conscious men in the world, in our relationships and in our church.

We will tell our stories around the winter fire.

We will learn from our elders.

We will laugh.

We will cry.

We will be Men together.

Most of all, we will be humbled

and encouraged by your presence and participation in this celebration of our life in Christ with your CCH spiritual brothers.

Doors open for snacks and fellowship at 5:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Chanting and teaching from a special guest begins at 6:00 p.m. Our Sacred Journey to the Fire Circle on property is set for 6:45 p.m.

To register, please contact the church office. ☎

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 22

A community of faith offers the support of example, correction, and mutual concern in the spiritual journey.

Above all, participating in the mystery of Christ through the celebration of the liturgy, Eucharist, and silent prayer binds the community in a common search for transformation and union with God.

The presence of Christ is ministered to each other and becomes tangible in the community, especially when it is gathered for worship or engaged in some work of service to those in need.

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

*Please bring your own lunch.
Cost is a suggested love offering. Scholarships are available as needed.
Please register at least two days prior with the CCH office or website.

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.

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING
POTLUCK DINNER

Thursday, November 28, 2019
11:30 am-1:30 pm
CCH Fellowship Hall

All are welcome to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday
in this conscious and loving way as a church family.

Simply sign up to bring food to share.
Come when you can. Leave when you must.

Doors open at 11:30 a.m. for music and mingling.
Dinner is served at noon.
Farewell benediction at 1:30 p.m.

The sign up sheet is posted on the CCH kitchen doors.

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

Visit consciouharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Nov 16 9am-4pm \$20
BYO lunch. Preregister by Nov 14

Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner
Nov 28 11:30am-1:30pm
Sign-up sheet on CCH kitchen door

Office & Bookstore Closed
Nov 28-29

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 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.consciouharmony.org



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*'Today is holy to the Lord your God.
Do not be sad, and do not weep.
... Go, eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks, and allot
portions to those who have nothing prepared;
for today is holy to our Lord.
Do not be sadden this day, for rejoicing
in the Lord must be your strength!
... Today is holy.'*
Nehemiah 8:8-11

THANKSGIVING

*We thank God always for you, brothers and sisters,
because your faith flourishes ever more,
and the love of every one of you for one another
grows ever greater.
... To this end, we always pray for you,
that our God may make you worthy of His calling
and powerfully bring to fulfillment
every good purpose
and every effort of faith,
that the name of our Lord Jesus
may be glorified in you, and you in Him,
in accord with the grace of our God
and Lord, Jesus Christ.
2 Thessalonians 1:3, 11-12*