



# THE MARK

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**KNOW THYSELF**

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# DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

BY PETER HAAS

As we prepare for Holy Week and Easter during these unusual times, I invite you to make a specific aim and effort: read three profoundly significant chapters in Bernadette Robert's masterpiece of mystical theology called *The Real Christ*: "Death of Christ," "Resurrection," and "Ascension." Reading these ideas in chapters 22-24 will serve each of us on our journey to know thyself and then surrender thyself.

These chapters span pages 341-396 and are teeming with enriching spiritual wisdom. These chapters embody the practical and logical implications that flow from Bernadette's no-self experience on the spiritual journey, beyond the unitive state. It seems to me that, in these times, the wisdom conveyed through these chapters should be annual required reading for contemplatives during Holy Week. To attract your curiosity, here are few key ideas from these significant essays.

## Death of Christ

One of the most startling moments in reading *The Real Christ* is realizing that by "Christ" Bernadette does not mean Jesus. By Christ, Bernadette means the union of the divine Logos with universal human nature. Christ is the What. Jesus is the Who, and the vehicle by which the What was revealed.

She draws an important distinction as to what this means for the death of Christ: "There is no mystery in the death of Jesus, his death was no different from the death of any other human being. The real mystery is the *death of Christ* ... Just as 'Christ' was Jesus' oneness with God on earth, so too, Christ was Paul's, Mary's and everyone's union with God on this earth. There is not a mystery, however, about the physicality of death – every *body* dies of something – the real mystery is the loss of 'person' along with its experience of *oneness with*

*God ...*" (p. 341). This means that when we die physically, when the body ceases to be alive, there is still something that never dies, and that something is Christ, our eternal oneness with God. At death, Bernadette explains, "as totally indistinguishable, body and soul move to a different dimension of existence – only *not of this earth*. There is *never* any separation of body and soul, both are simultaneously 'transformed' and indistinguishable in the glory of God." (p.364)

This seems to mean that, "The death of 'Christ' is far *more* than the physical death of the man Jesus – more, even, than the physical death of all who know Christ as the true nature of *their* oneness with God. The death of man's oneness with God *in this world* is the death of the *person* or *self* who experienced God as one's true Life and Being. Thus, with this sudden falling away of the 'experiencer' (*person* or *self*), the

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body is left without the slightest experience of *life or being*.” (p. 341)

What all this heady theology means for you and me is that, on the spiritual journey, we should not be surprised that parts or even whole aspects of our self begin to disappear. This is a normal part of the process. Most will not lose all of their self before physically dying, but many lose parts of the self. For example, one dies to irritability and in its place emerge peace and lightheartedness. To be sure, the unfolding death of self is much more than getting a psychological upgrade, replacing false self with the true self. For Bernadette, and many others, it seems to be the gradual disappearance of the very thing that knows that it knows anything at all this side of heaven – including God.

### **Resurrection**

So, what happens after we die? Bernadette suggests that we

are instantly resurrected. Not physically, but psycho-spiritually. She explains, “The *revelation* we know as *Resurrection* is the answer to the true nature of *what remains* beyond death, beyond all *experience* of life and being. *Resurrection is one thing and one thing only – it is the revelation of the Real Christ*. Christ is not *Who* remains, but the true nature of *What* remains ...” Bernadette summarizes that the revelation of the resurrection reveals four truths:

1. Something in each of us goes right on living only *without any experience of life or being*. (p. 369)
2. *No separation of body and soul*. There is no soul popping out of a body and later popping back in. (p. 369)
3. Not an event that takes place down the road hundreds or thousands of years after one dies. Following death of the sensory body, a person is

immediately out of space-and-time ... Resurrection directly follows death of the body. (p. 370)

4. Resurrection is the revelation of the whole mystery of God’s eternal oneness with humanity, and how God brought it about – the Incarnation. (p. 373)

Perhaps what this means for you and me is that when we really discover what we are, we begin to discover a quality of fearlessness – not a naiveté, but a deep faith, that enables us to give and serve and live for others in the face of uncommon situations and demands. Resurrection fuels unconditional love and spending one’s self to the fullest extent possible in service to love and joy, easing the suffering of our Common Father, and our brothers and sisters in the human family.

*continued on page 4*

## Ascension

Bernadette continues, “Since every major event in Christ’s life is a revelation of Man and how it will go for everyone, we might go over what this particular event reveals:

1. “That the body disappears in the glory of God (heaven) tells us there are no *visible* bodies in God (in heaven) and that heaven is no material, physical ‘place.’”
2. “Both Resurrection and Ascension reveal there is no separation of body and soul, the whole of man arises and

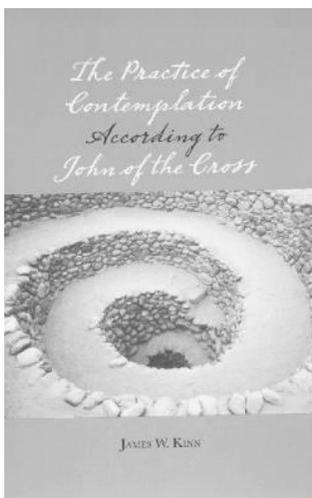
ascends as one.”

3. “A glorified body is not a visible body.”
4. “The Ascension reveals that Resurrection is not our final heavenly estate; not our eternal life with and in God ... While Resurrection assures us of life after death, the Ascension assures us eternal life is not in or of this world, not on this earth or any place, but solely in and with God.”
5. “The Ascension is not some out of the body experience – but its opposite.”

If you have ever wondered what the purpose of life is, Bernadette’s teaching on Ascension, and her follow-up chapter on Theosis give clear guidance and answers; wisdom that illuminates our destiny and lifts us out of any temptation to give up on the journey, or feel pessimistic that nothing will ever change or be different. Bernadette’s vision and Jesus’ revelation articulate a completely different Understanding of the nature of Ultimate Reality and our purpose here on planet earth. Amen. ☸

## BOOK LOOK

### *The Practice of Contemplation According to John of the Cross*



Author James W. Kinn provides an accessible introduction, written in non-theological language, to the extraordinarily important, relevant teachings and mystical writings of St. John of the Cross. What makes this short book so useful to our community is the focus on the practice of contemplation and contemplative prayer. Kinn helps make sense of John’s writings and clarifies the different nights as stages of prayer.

If you are seeking a wise companion on your journey, as *The Way Draws Us Deeper*, this book will be eagerly welcomed. Here’s a sampling: “The active night of the spirit deals essentially with the active progress from common meditation to a simple prayer of faith. That is, our prayer at this stage becomes naturally more simple, with less and less intellectual work or affective response. Then prayer tends to grow into a simple act of faith ...” ☸

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# RESURRECTION

“Jesus lives on in heart of the universe in a new relatedness; his death was not the end but the beginning of new life in God. Resurrection means that we too will live on to the extent that we live now; that is, to the extent that we focus our passion, loyalty, and care to family, friends, community, nation, to transcend ourselves in love. The magnitude of our relatedness is the breadth of our lives, and the degree to which we live on in the evolution of life. To live eternal life is to live in the now unconditionally and wholeheartedly, to lose ourselves for the sake of love. The resurrection of Jesus Christ anticipates the destiny of the cosmos – a new field of theandric energy embracing the cosmos. If the resurrection anticipates our future in God, then the one who is raised from the dead shows the kind of future God intends. The resurrection happens in the present moment, but it is a present moment bathed in future, a new relationship with God, a new union, a new wholeness – a new catholicity – by which life is wholly unified.”

Ilia Delio, *Making All Things New*

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## 2020 ANNUAL COMMUNITY READING

*The Monk Within* by Beverly Lanzetta

We invite you to read this book as our community reading in 2020.



### THE CHURCH of CONSCIOUS HARMONY

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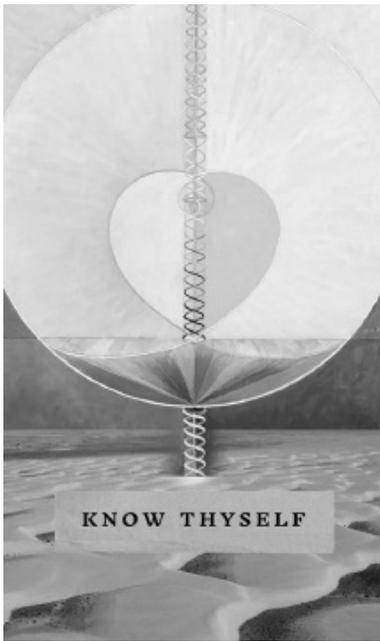
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*I am the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6*

## ANNUAL AIM: THE WAY DRAWS US DEEPER

KNOW THYSELF BY JC SHAKESPEARE

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Self-observation  
carried out with the idea  
of not identifying  
with what you observe  
is the keynote  
of this system practically  
and it is a very difficult thing  
to carry out.

Maurice Nicoll, "The Reason Why  
We Have To Observe Ourselves,"  
*Commentaries*, Vol. 2

Observing oneself  
is quite different  
from thinking about oneself. We  
do too much thinking,  
even brooding,  
about ourselves and our problems.  
... We have to learn how to  
look at ourselves from the inside.

J. G. Bennett, *Transformation*

*Think of what is above [inner] ...  
your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Colossians 3:2-3

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Haven't I always known myself? I'm the world's foremost expert on me – or so I thought for the first 37 years of my life. Then the paths, choices, circumstances and events I encountered led me inexorably to the Church of Conscious Harmony and this strange teaching known as The Work of Inner Christianity. What a shock it was to discover the self I thought I knew was imaginary!

If you mention the temple inscription of the Oracle at Delphi – "Know thyself" – to anyone who's been around CCH for a minute, the response comes back with the certainty of a knock-knock joke – "Which self?"

Dr. Nicoll writes, "... The Work teaches that we are not one but many. You are not, as the illusion of life might make you think, one person, one I. You are many different 'I's. And unless you assimilate deeply this idea, your life will be full of paradoxes, oppositions and contradictions. As you know, this illusion that we are one is called Imaginary 'I', and, as most of you have heard, the whole trend and purpose and aim of this Work is to get free from this illusion in order that one can approach Real I and find one's centre of gravity in Real I rather than in Imaginary 'I.'" (*Commentaries*, p. 1348)

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The road to self-knowledge, laid out on the map of the Work, leads us through the war of Imaginary 'I' into the promised land of Real I. I have seen this land in fleeting moments, and looking back at mileposts along the way helps me understand how this process of self-knowledge has unfolded in my life.

The idea of multiplicity resonated deeply with me; how did all these 'I's get there in the first place? Recently I discovered a treasure chest of old photos that took me all the way back to the beginning, enlivening memories and connecting me to the essence of little JC. I was a happy child in love with the world, running open-armed after loving connection. Here I'm nestled in my father's lap at the edge of the ocean, thrilled at the advance of the cold, salty spray. There I'm standing on a rock, waving with my hand so high in the air it's like I'm about to float. Candles on a birthday cake light up my face, bursting with surprise and delight. Where did that JC go?

I recall a curious feeling taking hold in me as I neared the threshold of adolescence, a feeling as though some great mystery was about to be revealed. I told my mother that I felt like there was something deeper behind the reality I could see with my eyes and touch with my hands. Today I can recognize these stirrings as the emergence of

magnetic center, that part of the soul that feels attracted by the pull of the Spirit greater than myself.

My mother told me I was ready to accept Jesus into my heart as my savior. She had me repeat a prayer: "I'm a sinner and I'm ready to repent. Please enter me and give me a clean heart." That sounded like a pretty good deal to me, so I eagerly waited for signs of this magical transformation.

For a couple of weeks, I carried my Bible around, underlining passages with multicolored markers and telling my friends all about Jesus and the good news of the gospels. But I slowly noticed that not much had changed in my heart. I was still annoyed and angry at my little sister, I was still dismayed that we had moved from South Carolina to New Jersey, and the biological urges that haunt pubescent Christian boys continued unabated.

Where was my clean heart? What was wrong with me? I soon discovered a shortcut to transformation with some of the neighborhood kids – marijuana. I remember getting high and running through the woods behind the park, feeling like I was in some medieval forest in another time. I had found the key to this other world I had been looking for! And thus another army of 'I's was born, full of empty

promises and massive distraction.

Shortly thereafter an angry confrontation with my father ended with his malediction, "You're on the road to hell!" My, how the pendulum swung. I hardened my heart and turned my back. I wandered through this dark desert for many years, believing that God wasn't real or, if He was, that He didn't matter.

The timeline of my teen years, captured through the photos in the box, tells a different story from the boy who wanted loving connection. This older boy wants nothing of the sort. He scowls and glares at anyone who dares to point a camera at his face. His displeasure in the company of his family has a palpable presence in these pictures.

The "self" that I "knew" as I headed into chronological adulthood was an angry, insecure, sarcastic, hard-drinking, dope-smoking smartass. The war between my essence of loving connection and the outer armor of this snarling, subversive shell was deep in my unconscious for many years. It manifested through all manner of self-sabotage, leaving me with a feeling of driving blindly through life with one foot on the gas, the other on the brake, both feet pressed firmly to the floor.

It took me nine years to stumble through college. My aim was to chase fleeting pleasures

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with relentless tenacity, and to stay as free from responsibility as possible in the process. I sustained myself with itinerant work in restaurants and bars, and then found the thing that I felt sure was my true calling – standup comedy.

Standup was an outlet for all the venomous emotion that had built up over the years inside me. I raged against everything that I thought was stupid, which was essentially any way of life, any form of expression, any political idea that wasn't exactly like my own.

When I was 37, things began to shift. I had a conversation with some friends one night where we discussed things for which we'd be willing to die – I couldn't come up with a single thing. This was still eating at me the next day. I could rant for hours about things that I was against, but what was I for? It was a disturbing self-observation, one that I believe was prompted by the re-emergence of magnetic center.

Around this time, some theater friends invited me to a christening at a place called The Church of Conscious Harmony. I laughed at the name, but attended the event anyway. Tim Cook uttered some words that radically altered the course of my life. He said, "Whatever you're doing in your life, don't change a thing." Wait, a minister was

telling me not to change a thing? This was too good to be true! "Just do it with the lights on."

The life I had been leading became increasingly uncomfortable as I began to practice having my "lights on," which meant truly observing the thoughts, feelings, and sensations that were present, whether I was meditating or telling dirty jokes to drunk people. For several strange weeks I hosted a midnight show at the comedy club on Saturday nights, drinking hard into the wee hours, then pulled myself into church a few hours later, copious tears pouring down my face as higher influences seeped through the cracks in my armor.

I couldn't take it. I quit going to church and returned for one last riotous run of self-directed life. I had successes that summer – appeared on a famous TV show, landed a lucrative voice-over gig in a big computer game, and appeared in a bizarre movie by a widely respected director. I also lost a seven-year marriage, drank myself into a deep depression, and ultimately had a brush with the law that was God's firm but gentle whack on the head with the proverbial board. I finally repented, or as Fr. Thomas Keating would say, stopped looking in the wrong direction for happiness.

Dr. Nicoll shares a little known addendum to the Delphi inscription,

"Nothing too much," which means, "Nothing in extremes."

"Self knowledge implies, amongst many other things, knowing the opposites in oneself – that is, becoming conscious of them. Then one can begin to understand and apply the second aphorism – 'Nothing too much.'" (*Commentaries*, p. 322)

Before I could stop riding the pendulum, I had to see, with the lights on, that there was a pendulum, swinging from extreme to extreme. I had to learn that the "big three," – self-observation, non-identification, and Self-remembering – would, if practiced over time, open the portal to Real I.

I returned home to CCH. Shortly thereafter, I was on a ten-day silent Centering Prayer retreat. On the morning of the eighth day, a miracle occurred. In morning prayer, a sensation of vertical, interior alignment made itself known to me. It was a profound inner connection, a literal feeling of being plugged in. A definite download occurred and I was infused with the knowledge that every single step of my life had been perfectly orchestrated and that I had never for a second been separate from God.

This was my first conscious contact with Real I, and I would never be able to go back to not knowing that I was "part and

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particle of God,” as Emerson wrote. The transitional journey from carefree tramp to intentional good householder fell rapidly into place. In a few years, I went from wandering comedian to teacher and then counselor. I got married again, bought a house, brought three lovely girls into the world. There have been bumps in the road and major shake-ups along the way, but they no longer destroy my world. Rather they strengthen my awareness of my connection to Real I, helping me to course-correct and know that I can always find my way home with my compass – self-observe, non-identify, Self-remember – and Centering Prayer to facilitate integration.

I know my selves and I know my Self. I can feel the difference. I can hold the opposites and love them all – the empathetic counselor and the sarcastic comedian, the workaholic and the sloth, the loving father and the grouchy dad, the seeker and the hider, the one who craves loving connection with God, yet covers his shame and hides with Adam and Eve. So the true heroic journey is the path from Imaginary ‘I’ to Real I, from the fragmented multiplicity built from unconscious conditioning to the unified whole of being “one with the Father, or God Transcendent.”

Nicoll writes, “We are born as self-developing organisms in this

somewhat evil life on earth, which the Work calls a pain-factory, in order, by a certain kind of work on ourselves, to reach something inherent in us (as a new being is inherent in an egg) which is called Real I. ... In this form of religion that we know, or that is accessible to us, roughly and often very badly indicated, the object is to have what is called ‘Christ’ born in us. You must not think of the historical Christ but of the fact of what was said in that form of esoteric teaching, that the Kingdom of Heaven lies within you and that means the realization

of Real I.” (*Commentaries*, p.1348)

The emergence of the Journey School at CCH is a profound evolution, from the deep wish of Tim Cook to grow a community of practice, to a “finely tuned accumulator” of pilgrims, traveling together on the road from Imaginary ‘I’ to Real I together. We’re not working on “self-improvement” – we are, each of us, seeds of humanity’s awakening.

“Knock knock.”

“Who’s there?”

“I am.”

“I am who?”

“Good question!” ☺

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## 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 27

Reflection on the Word of God  
in scripture and in our personal history  
is the foundation of contemplative prayer.

The spontaneous letting go of particular thoughts and feelings  
in prayer is a sign of progress in contemplation.

Contemplative prayer is characterized not so much  
by the absence of thoughts and feelings as by detachment from them.

# LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

## PRACTICING THE BASIC THREE BY NATHAN JONES

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### **Work Idea:** Self-Observe, Non-Identify and Self-Remember

It is easy to over complicate these beautifully clear three-fold instructions. Like a map, these instructions offer a way to deconstruct and dismantle the current 'I' that is holding the microphone of our inner voice. These three-fold practices can reduce the quickness with which an 'I' will grab and clutch the microphone, the quickness and duration that we become identified.

Let's explore these instructions a bit deeper. First, we Self-Observe by taking a three-centered observation of ourselves. Where are we intellectually? What thoughts are coursing through our mind? Where are we emotionally? What strong feelings are surging through us? Where are we physically? What does the belly feel like? Are we clenching our jaw or contracting muscles? This is referred to as taking a picture ourselves. Imagine observing yourself uncritically from three feet behind you. Next, we Non-Identify with the entire observation. This three-centered picture we have taken is not us. It is not Real I. We are stepping back and observing this picture and filing

it away. Lastly, we Self-Remember. We are children of God, the union of star dust and earth dirt.

**Work Source:** "Identifying is the chief obstacle to Self-Remembering." Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, p. 287.

**Application:** Practice this dance of Self-Observation, Non-Identification and Self-Remembering. These practices can change our level of being. But uncritical Self-Observation is the first necessary step, because otherwise we will not be able to practice these "three great things." It would be remiss not to mention that it is easy to think about the *Work and not do it*—something akin to someone speaking thoughtfully of the art of swimming, having never gotten wet. Try this: when you see the clock on an even hour Self-Observe, Non-Identify and Self-Remember. Then *be*, don't do.

**Further Resource:** Fr. Thomas Keating speaks of the three programs for happiness: security and survival, power and control, and affection and esteem. It is beneficial to relate these three

programs to the various 'I's we can observe inside of us. Refresh yourself with Fr. Keating's teaching by watching DVD #8 and #9 in his Spiritual Journey series. 

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## CENTERING PRAYER AT CCH

We offer several opportunities throughout the week for joining others in Centering Prayer. Please visit our website for the Zoom meeting codes if you are not already on the CCH email distribution list.

Daily 7-7:35 am  
Centering Prayer Service

Wednesdays 6:30-7:15 pm  
Contemplative Communion  
Service

Sundays 8-9 am  
Lectio Divina Service

Sundays 10-11:30 am  
Worship Service

Visit [consciouharmony.org](http://consciouharmony.org) for the latest information about Retreats.

# SERMON THEMES & HOLY WEEK WORSHIP TRUTHS OF UNION

In the church liturgy, Easter attunes with the moon and Christmas attunes with the sun. Easter Sunday roves about the calendar each year because it always occurs on the Sunday after the first full moon after the Northern Hemisphere's Vernal equinox – occurring as early as March 22nd and as late as April 25th. In contrast, Christmas always occurs on December 25th, three days after our Winter equinox. As it is above, so it is below: Easter and Christmas demonstrate the truth of union of life and death, moon and sun, night and day.

To join us virtually through Zoom video conferencing and to stay up-to-date, please visit [consciouharmony.org](http://consciouharmony.org), email [officemgr@consciouharmony.org](mailto:officemgr@consciouharmony.org), or call 512-347-9673.

April 5	Palm Sunday 10:00 am Worship	<i>United in Surrendering</i> Philippians 2:6-11
April 9	Maundy Thursday 8:00 pm Taizé service	<i>United in Serving</i> John 13:1-15
April 10	Good Friday Noon	<i>United in Dying</i> John 18:1-19:42
April 12	Easter Sunday 6:30 am Sunrise Service 8:00 am Lectio Divina 10:00 am Easter Worship	<i>United in Living</i> John 20:1-9
April 19	Second Sunday of Easter 10:00 am Worship	<i>United in Communing</i> Acts 2:42-47
April 26	Third Sunday of Easter 10:00 am Worship	<i>United Within</i> Community Reading Discussion on <i>The Monk Within</i>

## APRIL CALENDAR

For more details, visit  
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or call 512-347-9673

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Holy Week  
Apr 5-12  
See details at left.

### MONTHLY

1st Sundays  
Please consider donating non-perishables to a local food bank or charity.

### WEEKLY

Sundays  
\*Lectio Divina 8-9am  
\*Worship Service 10-11:30am

Wednesdays  
\*Contemplative Communion Service  
6:30-7:15pm

Thursdays  
\*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

### DAILY

\*Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

\*Join these services via Zoom video conferencing. Contact the website for instructions.  
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## THE RESURRECTED LIFE



*I came so that you may have life.*

John 10:10

We are invited to become living cells or members in the Mystical Body of Christ, which is Christ resurrected and body glorified, and consumed in the fire of the Spirit, a fire that moves like a moving stream throughout the relationships in the Trinity and into which we're invited to share. That is what is meant by "grace," a sharing in the divine life itself, which means the divine light, life and love.

What we need to keep in mind ... is the awareness that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves -- a part of a living divine human organism that is partly in the next life, or in heaven, and partly in this life, in the various ups and downs that prepare us for the full participation of the divine life after our departure from this life. Thomas Keating, recorded conversation February 27, 2015