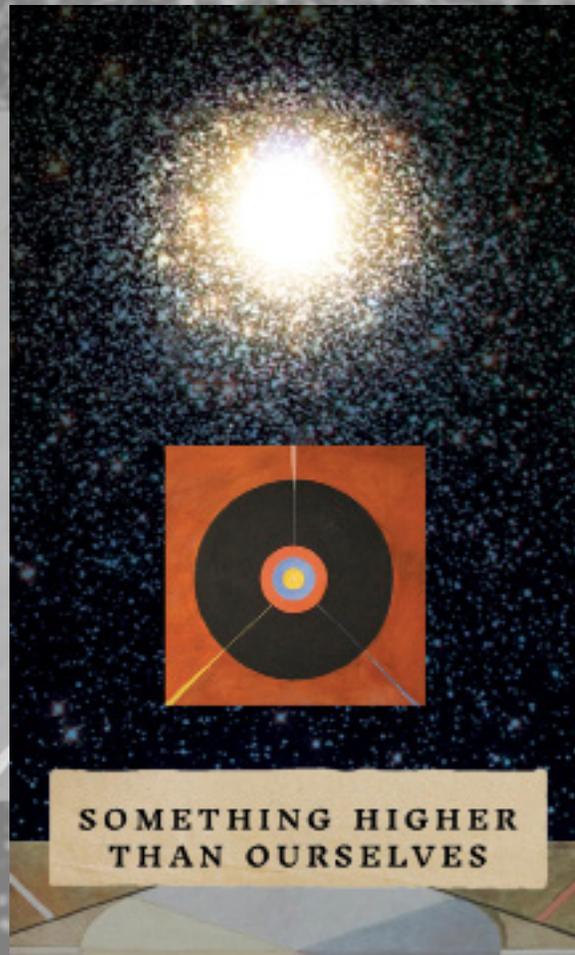


August 2020  
Volume 32  
Number 8



# THE MARK

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



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# THE STARRY HEAVENS ABOVE AND THE MORAL LAW WITHIN

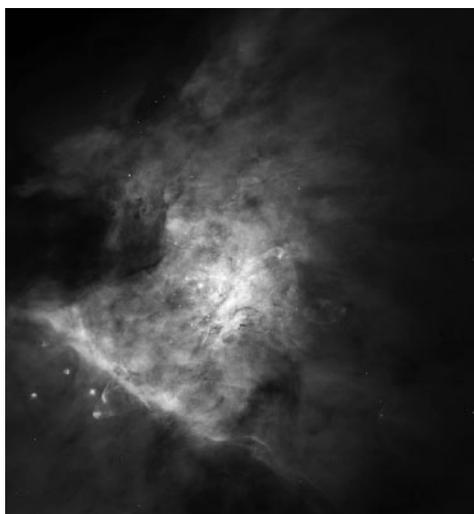
BY PETER HAAS

Thirty years ago, April 24, 1990, the most expensive and technologically advanced telescope ever built was launched into earth's orbit. There was worldwide anticipation for brilliant images taken from beyond Earth's atmosphere. Three weeks after its launch, the joy of anticipation was met by the profound disappointment of blurry images. Sadly, the primary mirror used by the optical system was the wrong shape, resulting in hazy, smudged pictures. Hope turned to frustration, then anger and blame.

About four years later a new, corrected mirror was installed, and the Hubble Telescope began to record for humankind perfectly clear images of untold grandeur, clarity and beauty. For the first time, humankind could vividly see beyond our galaxy into deep outer space and the "beginning" of observable light-time.

Perhaps you remember the first time you saw an image from the Hubble Telescope. For me, I was reading a National Geographic magazine, and I opened the fold-out poster. It was a full color

spread of the Orion Nebula, a favorite constellation of mine to gaze up at during Wisconsin's long winter months. I had always delighted in Orion's symmetry and beauty, but now, looking at it through the lens of Hubble's perspective, I was bowed down in adoration and awe; undone by a sense of incomparable smallness.



*Photo mosaic of Orion Nebula, NASA, C.R. O'Dell and S.K. Wong (Rice University)*

Words mostly fail to convey the experience of seeing the grandeur of the heavens, though Immanuel Kant's famous quotation is a good start: "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often

and steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within." The trick is in remembering to look up and to look within – especially in moments of forgetfulness, where we feel disconnected from God, Source, our true self or someone else.

Perhaps looking up into the universe leaves one feeling abandoned, alone, even depressed. In that case, here's an idea. The Psalmist speaks of the wisdom of pairing the overwhelming majestic heavens with the warm and nourishing word/wisdom of God. The universe above and the moral law within are sources of authority that can become a presence to us – not an authority to fear. Rather, a generative energy to receive and consent to.

The presence of the universe is in the silence of the stars, while the presence of the moral law is in the spoken sages through the ages. So, look up and look within. With your mind, heart and body, gaze into the heavens, gaze into the scriptures, and gaze into your soul; and remember as you read the enduring spiritual poetry of Psalm 19:

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*The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the*

*honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

Do notice how Psalm 19 expresses a therapeutic dimension: the law of the Lord, the word/wisdom of God is for reviving and nourishing the soul, not depleting it or crushing it. This therapeutic aspect is useful to keep in mind as we explore our attitudes to whatever we place our selves under the authority of, especially the scriptures or a spiritual teacher. While we may not yet see ourselves as clearly as the higher influence see us, we can listen to what the higher influence says to us – whether through a teacher or through a wisdom teaching. Though it may sometimes be uncomfortable to hear how the word/wisdom of the Spirit is speaking to us (whether through the silence, the scriptures, a teacher or the night sky), that initial discomfort can often lead to joy, gratitude and peace.

### **The Authority of Affirmations**

In addition to the cosmological and the moral dimensions, a third aspect of living under the authority

of something higher than ourselves is the important role affirmations play in our spiritual well-being. Affirmations are a kind of self-imposed authority over our three-brained-beings. We use words to secure outside of ourselves as a kind of energetic anchor what our heart wishes for; a wish that both grounds us and pulls us forward.

Engaged consciously, our three-centered, spoken-out-loud affirmations can become an external authority that we are accountable to. Our words and thoughts are so impactful they can influence the conscious field around us, emotionally, physically, relationally, spiritually. Our affirmations become declarations of independence to live under a new authority, not just the whims of our self: but our conscious intentions.

This constraint of our whims by way of coming under the authority of one's affirmations can be described in many ways. I like the way 13<sup>th</sup> century mystic Mechthild of Magdeburg wrote about the process, "You shall love the naughting of the self, and flee the self. You shall stand alone,

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seeking help from none, so that thy being may be quiet. Free from the entrapment of all things... You shall care for the sick and yet have nothing for thyself. You shall drink the waters of sorrow and kindle the fire of love with the flame of virtue. You shall dwell in the true wilderness.”

### **Three Images to Affirm Bigger than Ourselves: Fire, Seed, Stream**

As a community, we are invited to hold this trinity of icons in our individual and group consciousness. In this way, we are together coming under the authority of three powerful images that can help us be held by the Center as we are physically not together during this pandemic season. While we know this too shall pass, we affirm that our church and community is growing stronger, deeper, broader, more real, more vulnerable to each other, more dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom, and more committed to a life of God devotion. These three images can become authoritative beacons grounded on the unshakeable shore of wisdom for countless soul-ships sailing the stormy seas of life. I speak these words as if they were my mantra and bring them into my mind’s eyes and body consciousness: *Fire. Seed. Stream.* Please join me in this affirmation:

The Fire of this situation is burning away, purging out the old, bringing in the new. The fire

of God’s word is burning in our hearts, with silence and wisdom.

The Seed of wisdom and devotion, activated by the fire, is being sown in and through us into a global field of opportunity. Our Being is the seed. The teaching is the seed. The practices are the seed. Our devotion is the seed. The influences of worship, scripture, *lectio*, silence, Centering Prayer, Eucharist, reading the *Commentaries*, the Journey School, our Journey Groups, and countless other aspects – all are high quality seeds of influence.

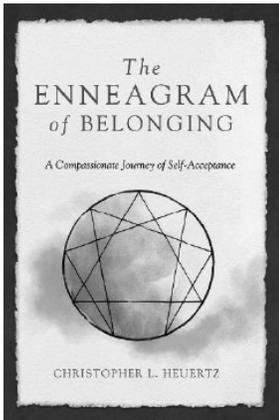
The Stream of Presence is flowing to us from Source, connecting us and enlivening our community with conscious influences. The stream of the Spirit is flowing through us outward, to many. We are connected in this stream of conscious love. We are embraced in its unfolding, evolving flow, strength and creativity. We don’t have to know where it is going. We get to consent to being in its beautiful flow. Amen. ☸

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## IN GOD’S INCARNATE PRESENCE

“By bringing together evolution and Incarnation in a single vision, Teilhard reshaped the meaning of gospel life. The gospel call to ‘leave all and follow me’ does not mean leaving the world but rather returning to the world with new vision and a deeper conviction to take hold of Christ in the heart of matter and to further Christ in the universality of his incarnation. We humans are evolution made conscious; hence, our choices for and in the world shape the future of the world. What we have to do, Teilhard says, ‘is not simply to forward a human task but to bring Christ to completion . . . to cultivate the world. The world is still being created, and it is Christ who is reaching his fulfillment through it.’ The Christian of today must gather from the body all the spiritual power it contains, and not only from the personal body but from the whole immense cosmic body that is the world stuff in evolution. We are to harness the energies of love for the forward movement of evolution toward the fullness of Christ. This means to live from the center of the heart where love grows and to reach out to the world with faith, hope, and trust in God’s incarnate presence.”

Ilia Delio, *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness*



## BOOK LOOK

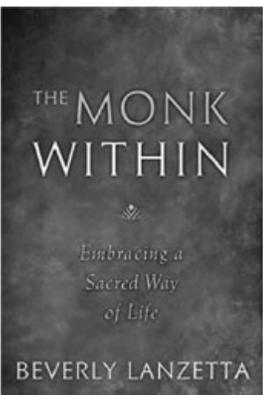
### *THE ENNEAGRAM OF BELONGING*

Christopher Heuertz delivers a follow-up to his deeply impactful *The Sacred Enneagram* that focuses the wisdom of the Enneagram on our relationships – with God, self and others. Again, he has written a profoundly accessible, creative and wise resource that continues to deepen the

usefulness of the Enneagram tool for our era.

This book has many qualities, including very helpful diagrams and images that help interpret the theoretical and intellectual concepts. Heuertz unfolds the three primary centers: thinking, feeling and moving into the Enneagram process. He refers to thinking as the “holy ideas.” Feeling as the “virtues,” and Moving as “the nine instincts.”

Among the ever-growing list of books written about the Enneagram, this uniquely synthesizes psychology, the Work of Inner Christianity and contemplative wisdom in a very soul-friendly way. When asked, “What is the one book to read on the Enneagram?” The answer will be, “Two books by one author: *The Sacred Enneagram* and *The Enneagram of Belonging* by Chris Heuertz.” ☸



## 2020 ANNUAL COMMUNITY READING

In 2020, as a community, we are reading Beverly Lanzetta’s *The Monk Within: Embracing a Sacred Way of Life*. Please join us in reading this significant resource that supports our annual aim: The Way Draws Us Deeper. ☸



### THE CHURCH of CONSCIOUS HARMONY

7406 Newhall Lane  
Austin, Texas 78746  
512.347.9673  
512.347.9675 fax  
[www.consciousharmony.org](http://www.consciousharmony.org)

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[minister@consciousharmony.org](mailto:minister@consciousharmony.org)

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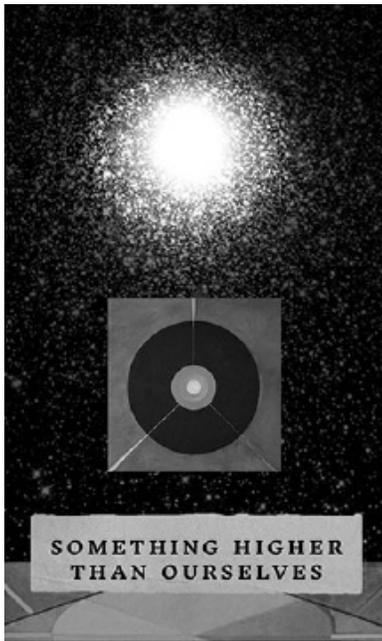
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[bizmgr@consciousharmony.org](mailto:bizmgr@consciousharmony.org)  
Lisa Genung, Office Manager  
[officemgr@consciousharmony.org](mailto:officemgr@consciousharmony.org)  
Jill Frank, Program Director  
[programdir@consciousharmony.org](mailto:programdir@consciousharmony.org)

#### BOOKSTORE

Virginia Maxwell, Manager  
[bookmgr@consciousharmony.org](mailto:bookmgr@consciousharmony.org)

#### NEWSLETTER

Sandra Ely, Editor  
[garzaely@swbell.net](mailto:garzaely@swbell.net)  
Carol Hagar, Design  
[lfeisart@austin.rr.com](mailto:lfeisart@austin.rr.com)



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

## ANNUAL AIM: THE WAY DRAWS US DEEPER

### SOMETHING HIGHER THAN OURSELVES

BY MARK RUSSELL

The Earth is part  
of the *Planetary World*  
which gravitates around the *Sun*,  
the master of our system.  
The *Sun* is one of many stars  
of the galaxy known by the name  
of the *Milky Way*,  
a system to which  
the whole solar system belongs. In  
the sky we can detect  
other galaxies similar to ours. ...  
These large units  
in their ensemble constitute  
*All the Worlds*:  
the whole content of the Universe.  
...The Absolute, that is to say,  
God manifested.

*Boris Mouravieff, Gnosis I*

*Just as a branch  
cannot bear fruit on its own  
unless it remains on the vine,  
so neither can you  
unless you remain in me.*

John 15:4

It is necessary to know something of the whole  
before one can think rightly of the part. ...  
We live in a related Universe – a Universe in which everything  
is related with everything else  
and everything influences everything else,  
and nothing can be taken separately, isolated from the rest.

Maurice Nicoll, quoting P. D. Ouspensky,  
“Further Note on Psychological Thinking,” *Commentaries*, Vol. 3

As I sit down to begin writing this article, I feel awash in the tension of the impressions from current events. Protests are happening daily in cities across the country, and the long-term implications of that are very much unknown. I watched a joint SpaceX and NASA manned mission to the space station, and strongly felt the connection to the cosmic aspect of existence that such events can create. The Covid-19 pandemic is still very much a health risk, and I must stay aware of that at all times. The large corporation I work for has embarked on an effort to emphasize

a company culture of compassion and willingness to deeply listen to others, with support measures put in place to help towards that.

All these varied impressions leave me with a feeling of the inter-connectedness of life and events. My mind knows that this is the reality of existence, but it is not often that I have such a felt experience of it. When I do, designations such as bad or good don't feel useful, and are replaced by a sense that all things belong. This is not only true of the exterior cosmos, but the Work of Inner Christianity helps us see that this is true of the

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interior cosmos as well. We are a mixture of tendencies that we like and others we don't. The impulse towards a self-improvement project is very strong, but we are taught that our job is to become more aware of ourselves and accept what we find, ideally with a sense of humor. Whether God chooses to take away any of those impulses as we continue in the spiritual journey is only God's business.

“The experience of being loved by God enables us to accept our false self as it is, and then to let go of it and journey to our True Self. The inward journey to our True Self is the way of divine love.”

Fr. Thomas Keating, *Guideline for Christian Life, Growth & Transformation*

In my experience, however, knowing that the spiritual journey is not a self-improvement project doesn't immediately translate into freedom from those impulses. Our culture is inundated with this energy, which can't help but be present in our unconscious. This makes letting go of any self-improvement project an unfolding process as, through grace, we become increasingly aware of our patterns.

I recently had a conversation with my mother, who is experiencing age-related mental challenges, in which she described some of those challenges, and how she really needed to sit down and focus hard to make her brain work right again.

I was immediately struck by the level of magical thinking, but, by grace, in almost the same moment, I was able to observe that I also have the tendency to have magical views around willpower. As I reflected, it became increasingly clear that my relationship with willpower actually supports and interweaves with other tendencies that I have observed, but didn't really see as related.

I grew up in a household where both my parents had similar (mostly unconscious) views on the importance of willpower, which had a tendency to lead to an attitude of dominance. I see now that this dominance was directed both outward and inward, with the latter creating self-negativity about not being able to achieve some idealized standard. Growing up, however I was only able to see the outwardly projected part, and felt a great deal of negativity about how I was treated. Only recently has it occurred to me that my reaction was in part due to how similar my internal wiring is to my parents, and that someone else being in my shoes may not have been so triggered by that energy.

Once out on my own, I was overjoyed to be away from that energy, and focused on moving forward, viewing my past as being rather irrelevant to my future. At this point, my tendencies towards overemphasis on willpower leading to dominance were quite

unconscious, and pushed even more so by my rejection of my parents. As the Work teaches, the issue is not so much with the tendencies themselves, but rather with consciousness of them. In fact, I had some pretty amazing experiences because my views around willpower led me to try some adventurous things. However, since it was mostly unconscious, it played out in an uncontrolled way. Relationships were harmed, mostly in passive-aggressive ways where I couldn't even see how my actions served my tendency towards dominance. In fact, it was the divorce from a woman I truly loved, but couldn't figure out how to stay in relationship with, that led to a crisis of meaning in life, and eventually to the Church of Conscious Harmony.

After a number of years at CCH and in the Work, I had gained a great deal of self-knowledge, but the dynamic I've described was still not well observed. At the same time, my dad was having significant health issues, and my mom was struggling with some aspects of care-giving. The thought began to occur to me that perhaps I should move back to my home state and help care for my dad. I knew I still had a lot of unprocessed stuff with my dad, and my personality really did not want to go back, so it seemed pretty clear that this feeling was coming from something higher than myself. After much internal

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arguing, I eventually acceded to Spirit and moved back, and at least initially lived in my parent's basement apartment. I recall in my last spiritual direction meeting with Tim Cook before leaving, he asked me how I planned to put myself into situations to Work on myself after the move. I told him I was moving into my parent's basement. After a roar of laughter, he agreed that would do it. I felt some anxiety, but was also confident because I was a Work student and could will my way through most anything, right?

I spent five years back in my hometown, with the first four being the last years of my dad's life. I spent quite a bit of time with my parents, and tried hard to maintain consciousness of my wish to strengthen and heal my relationship with them. Much headway was made, and my sense is that my parent's experience of it was very positive, but I always felt like I had one foot in and one foot out, and that I wasn't making full use of the opportunity. Maybe this is the nature of working on such old and deep-seated energies, or maybe this is another sign of unrealistic expectations around willpower. If nothing else, however, during that time I did experience some release from my childhood rejection of my parents. Where lack of consciousness of similar tendencies once led to conflict, consciousness of similar

tendencies offers an opportunity for compassion and empathy.

While back in my hometown, Spirit continued to reveal parts of my hidden self in other ways as well. I was in a relationship with a woman with two grade-school aged kids, and life evolved in such a way that there were great advantages to all if we moved in together. I'm a private person and had never been in a living situation with that much energy, but figured I'd just need to will myself through an initial adjustment period, then all would be fine. Well, the adjustment period never ended, as I just could not seem to get used to the level of energy. Eventually, in the context of dealing with a chronic health issue, I had my genetics analyzed. Patterns were found that make my body unusually chemically reactive to stimulus, and people with those patterns need to take this into account in choosing their lifestyle.

All these events while back in my hometown together provided a great shock to my sense of who I am, and I shudder to think of what my reaction might have been without my experience at CCH and the grounding in Centering Prayer and the Work. I'll admit that initially I experienced a period where I really struggled with self-negativity, but as I worked with these energies, and, more importantly, kept myself open to Spirit, my felt experience

began to transform. The "shoulds" that underpinned the self-negativity began to subside, and I increasingly became able to both see and accept who I really am, strengths and limitations alike. With that came the sense that I had gained a much deeper understanding of the Christian teaching on humility, which Fr. Keating points at with: "The complementary movement towards divine love is growth in humility which is the acceptance of the reality about ourselves, our own weakness and limitations." The most striking aspect of the felt experience, however, was the profound sense of relief at being able to set down that piece of my false self that I'd been holding up my whole life.

Of course, everything I experienced was consistent with multiple teachings we are blessed with here at CCH, including realizing I had not previously well understood the Work teaching on will. It's certainly not the first time that I've had an experience that initially felt like a new revelation, only to realize I've already been taught that many times. It's called the spiritual journey for a reason. A journey of increasing awareness and acceptance of what really is as an integrated whole, whose parts cannot be taken in isolation. This journey is anchored in an abiding connection to something higher than ourselves. May it be so! 

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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 LAW OF THREE BY NATHAN JONES

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### **Work Idea:**

The Work offers us two fundamental laws: the Law of Three and the Law of Seven. The Law of Three is responsible for all manifestations. It is composed of Active Force (first force), Passive Force or *force of resistance* (second force) and Neutralizing Force (third force). It is important to realize that all three forces must come together to create an event. Nothing has ever manifested that didn't contain these three forces. First force can be considered what we want, what gets in the way of us acquiring it is second force; and, as we currently stand, *life* is third force. The objective is to make the Work your third force. To illustrate, let's say:

I wanted to ask her to dance and was walking across the wooden floor to do just that (first force). Prior to reaching her someone else stepped in front of me, took her hand and started cutting a rug, I mean really dancing (second force).

Frustrated, I sulked back to my dark corner. This is life as third force.

However, when the Work enters...

Frustration and sulkiness were approaching, and I am able to observe it. I have seen this picture of me before. These situations strike deep and bring up old dusty insecurities. But that isn't me; it is not I. How nice of those two to remind me (the Work as third force). With a smile on my lips, I stand up a bit straighter and scan the room – and I feel the dance is happening in and all around me, cells, body, earth, cosmos.

### **Work Source:**

“From the stand point of this teaching the Universe is created: we live in firstly a *created* and secondly an *ordered* Universe. If the Universe were chaos, there would be no order and no laws. *Cosmos* literally means *order* as distinct from *chaos*. If the world

were chaos, the study of the laws of matter and so on would be impossible. Science could not exist. The *Law of Three* is the Law of the Three Forces of *Creation*. This law states that *three forces must enter into every manifestation*. But creation is governed by another law – the *Law of Seven* or the *Law of Order of Manifestation*. Creative forces could not work unless they created in some order and this order of manifestation or order of creation is due to the Law of Seven.” *Commentaries*, p. 108.

### **Application:**

The Law of Three runs counter to what our senses offer as reality and conflicts largely with what antiquated science classes taught. The cutting edge of science would tell us now there is no such thing as an objective observer and energy and matter are one and the same. But we weren't raised in a classroom run by Brother Einstein or Sister

continued from page 9

Delio. We have been raised on Newton's Third Law of Motion: "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." It seems Newton failed to account for third force. Science has long played a catch-up game with wisdom – at least they've been in a long tango. The notion that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction should be enhanced. Recall, we don't bark at our dogs to see if they talk back. Learn to recognize first and second force (the *force of resistance*). In order to see second force, you must see first force. To keep this simple, you must want something. If you don't want something, there won't be second force. You must ask yourself, "What do I want?" For the purpose of this practice, answer this question: What do I want? Then, watch what prevents you from acquiring it. Lastly, apply a Work idea! Perhaps simply observe, non-identify and self-remember, or practice any other Work idea – thereby encouraging the Work to be third force.

**Further Resource:**

Consider how the Law of Three is directly related to the Christian Trinity as well as the three principal Hindu Gods: Brahma, The Creator; Vishnu, The Preserver; and Shiva, The Destroyer. 

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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 31

Solitude is not primarily a place  
but an attitude of total commitment to God.  
When one belongs completely to God,  
the sharing of one's life and gifts  
continually increases.

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## AUGUST SERMON SERIES

### JOYS OF LIFE

- |           |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| August 2  | The Joy of Remembering   |
| August 9  | The Joy of Wishing       |
| August 23 | The Joy of Releasing     |
| August 30 | The Joy of Understanding |

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# ONLINE CONTEMPLATIVE RETREAT

Vestibules to the Practice of Centering Prayer

The Five Dimensional Approach

with Jim Reale

September 11-14, 2020

Please join this unique, online, in-depth,  
multi-day contemplative retreat  
with a focus on experiencing “vestibules”  
to prepare yourself for Centering Prayer.

The vestibules, created by Jim Reale, include:

**Movement** – Simple body movement, carefully guided, opens  
the body and releases habitual tension.

**Chant** – Sacred chant, composed with the idea of musical  
simplicity and theological depth are taught to raise our voices  
together just as monastic communities have done for centuries.

These original chants, combined with reverential gesture,  
instill a devotional quality that moves  
our intention deeper into the heart.

**Breath** – Conscious breathing techniques will be introduced  
to quiet and free the mind.

Weaving movement, breath, and chant with Centering Prayer  
creates a contemplative tapestry of profound calm  
that enriches, deepens, and grounds our experience.  
Retreat participants will receive instructional handouts  
to continue the vestibules with their prayer practice.

More details are online at [consciousharmony.org](http://consciousharmony.org).  
Cost: \$100 Register online.

## AUGUST CALENDAR

For more details, visit  
[consciousharmony.org](http://consciousharmony.org)  
or call 512-347-9673

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Online One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat  
Aug 8 9am-3pm  
No cost. Register online.

Courtyard Communion  
Schedule for you/your family:  
[minister@consciousharmony.org](mailto:minister@consciousharmony.org)

Online Vestibules of Centering Prayer Retreat  
Led by Jim Reale  
Sept 11-14 Fri 5-8pm, Sat-Mon 7am-4pm  
\$100 Register online

### MONTHLY

Caritas Donations  
To continue our long standing partnership,  
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### WEEKLY

Sundays  
\*Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am  
\*Intercessory Prayer 9am  
\*Worship Service 10-11:30am  
\*\*Youth Program 1pm

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

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

Saturdays  
\*Scriptorium 11am  
\*Compline 9-9:15pm

### DAILY

\*Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

\*Join these services via Zoom video  
conferencing. Contact the website for  
instructions.

\*\*All our youth are invited to participate.  
Contact [youthdir@consciousharmony.org](mailto:youthdir@consciousharmony.org)  
for Zoom code.

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



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## THE TRANSFIGURATION



Raffaello Sanzio, *The Transfiguration*

*Then a cloud appeared and covered them,  
and a voice came from the cloud:  
"This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*

Mark 9:7

The Transfiguration reveals the state of mind and dispositions of the apostles who are paradigms of the developing consciousness of those who are growing in faith.

They are given a glimpse of the world beyond the limitation of space and time.

At first they are overjoyed . . .

then the implications of this new world with its demands dawns upon them.

They are terrified and fall on their faces in an attitude of awe, praise, gratitude and love, all rolled into one.

The apostles remain in this position until Jesus touches them. "Don't be afraid," He said.

They look up and see no one but Jesus.

They experience the reassurance of His presence and touch. Here we find the basic pattern of the Christian path.

The experience of God may be scary at first but quickly it becomes reassuring.

There is nothing to be afraid of because we are made for divine union.

*Fr. Thomas Keating, The Mystery of Christ*

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