

September 2020  
Volume 32  
Number 9



# THE MARK

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



---

---

# INTERBEING

BY PETER HAAS

Sometimes movies are powerful teachers. I recently enjoyed watching the movie *Avatar*. It is the rare movie that conveys an example of the beauty of living in harmony with creation in contrast to the terror of exploiting it. Here's a simple overview of the plot. The Na'vi are an indigenous people who peacefully live on the planet Pandora until human beings arrive to mine a precious material that just so happens to be buried underneath the Na'vi tribe's most sacred sites and forest villages.

Beyond the drama of the make-believe conflict, what spoke to me most was the way the Na'vi people connect with certain animals and living things, like trees and plants. The Na'vi connect through their tail which is comprised of a luminescent filament that can interweave with other creatures or trees, and through this physical connection energy, life, wisdom, information, and memories are transferred, from one being to another.

In real life, we human beings do not seem to have such a literal

and functioning connection device. However, we can use our hands and eyes to convey and receive energetic qualities from and to other living beings. For example, I have heard of people who can look into a horse's eyes and know the horse and communicate with the horse. So too, I have heard of energetic healers who can convey energy and specific healing knowledge through physical touch – near or far. And certainly, forest bathing and star gazing are real phenomena that convey energetic influences. So, with certain attention, perhaps we are more connected than we realize.

We human beings have a lot to learn about interbeing. Our history is marked by far too much non-interbeing. Other words for that include violence, war, destruction, depletion, slavery, racism, and ethnic cleansing. Amazingly, the more we have grown interdependent to one another in a globalized world, we are learning if not how to get along, then certainly how not to go to war. The threat of mutual destruction seems to keep things in check. It is

better than the alternative. In the meantime, we are learning how to be a global civilization, with all its blessings and difficulties.

Prophets arise among our species to help us in our evolutionary work. The spiritual life prefers evolution to revolution, in part because evolution nurtures balance whereas revolution often incites disruption. One of the most important prophetic voices humankind has heard in all recorded history is the imperative moral call from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Let us let his voice define a spiritual understanding of the possibilities for interbeing that still remain for our generation, for you and me. In his Commencement Address for Oberlin College given in June 1965, he urged humankind,

“I'd like to say that we are challenged to achieve a world perspective. Anyone who feels that we can live in isolation today, anyone who feels that we can live without being concerned

---

---

about other individuals and other nations is sleeping through a revolution. The world in which we live is geographically one. The great challenge now is to make it one in terms of brotherhood. Now it is true that the geographic togetherness of our world has been brought into being, to a large extent, through modern man's scientific ingenuity. Modern man, through his scientific genius, has been able to dwarf distance and place time in chains. Yes, we've been able to carve highways through the stratosphere, and our jet planes have compressed into minutes distances that once took weeks and months. And so this is a small world from a geographical point of view. What we are facing today is the fact that through our scientific and technological genius we've made of this world a neighborhood. And now through our moral and

ethical commitment we must make of it a brotherhood. We must all learn to live together as brothers [and sisters] – or we will all perish together as fools. This is the great issue facing us today. No individual can live alone; no nation can live alone. We are tied together ... All I'm saying is simply this: that all [human] kind is tied together; all life is interrelated, and we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be – this is the interrelated structure of reality. John Donne caught it years ago and placed it in graphic terms: 'No person is an Island, entire of itself; every person is a piece of

the continent, a part of the main ... any person's death diminishes me, because I am involved in [human]kind ...' And by believing this, by living out this fact, we will be able to remain awake through a great [e]volution."

I encourage you to turn off the news and watch *Avatar* and see what lessons you see reflected to you about the nature of humankind and our American civilization. See what you see and ask yourself where you are unwilling to inter-be with others different from yourself.

Observe why that might be.

Work with it.

Transform it.

Send love to all sentient beings.

Wish for a more peaceful, just, harmonious, equitable, loving, wise way of being together on our planet.

We are all living in and through an epochal making moment; let us make corresponding conscious aims, efforts and wishes not just for us and ours, but for all and everything. 



THE CHURCH *of*  
CONSCIOUS HARMONY

7406 Newhall Lane  
Austin, Texas 78746  
512.347.9673  
512.347.9675 fax  
www.consciousharmony.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Begeman  
Pamela Begeman  
Mary Anne Best  
Eric DeJernett  
Ken Ely  
Donald Genung  
Mary Lea McAnally  
Lisa Morgan  
Lauri Raymond

MINISTER

Peter Haas  
minister@consciousharmony.org

EMERITUS MINISTERS

Tim & Barbara Cook

MUSIC

Billie Woods, Director  
musicdir@consciousharmony.org  
Sue Young

THE JOURNEY SCHOOL

Mary Anne Best, Abbess  
tjs@consciousharmony.org

YOUTH EDUCATION SERVICES

Deborah Hale, Children's Director  
childmin@consciousharmony.org  
Jacque Botto, Asst to the Children's Director  
Don Hale, Youth Director  
youthdir@consciousharmony.org  
David Jenkins, Asst to the Youth Director

OFFICE

Mon-Fri 8:30am-4pm  
Donald Genung, Business Manager  
bizmgr@consciousharmony.org  
Lisa Genung, Office Manager  
officemgr@consciousharmony.org  
Jill Frank, Program Director  
programdir@consciousharmony.org

BOOKSTORE

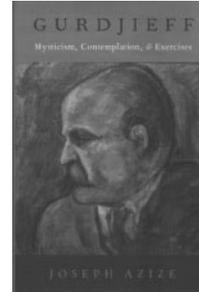
Virginia Maxwell, Manager  
bookmgr@consciousharmony.org

NEWSLETTER

Sandra Ely, Editor  
garzaely@swbell.net  
Carol Hagar, Design  
lifeisart@austin.rr.com

# BOOK LOOK

## THE INTERBEING OF GURDJIEFF'S VISION



*Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, & Exercises* by Joseph Azize is a book worthy of your attention. It is one of the most important historic research books about The Fourth Way and Mr. Gurdjieff to be published in the last fifty years, if not ever.

Published by Oxford University Press in January 2020, the list price is \$99. However, this is such a significant resource, it is worth re-alerting you to its availability.

Through deep research, practical exercises and prayers that Gurdjieff taught his students – including contemplative exercises that were only taught during his last years of life – are revealed in this book. If there is one word that summarizes Mr. Gurdjieff's cosmic vision, perhaps it is Interbeing. This is a very helpful book that explains much of the Work and Gurdjieff in accessible, well-researched ways.

## ONLINE 4-DAY RETREAT

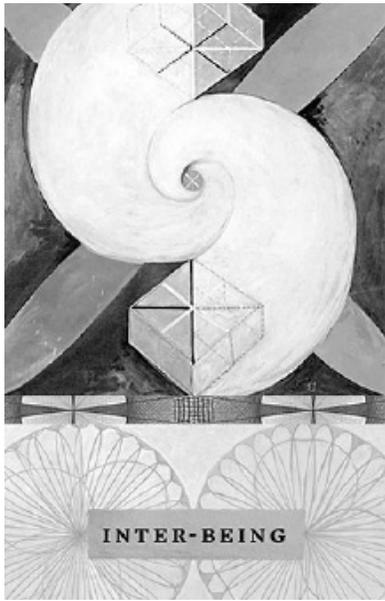
Vestibules to the Practice of Centering Prayer  
with Jim Reale

September 11-14, 2020

Weaving movement, breath, and chant with Centering Prayer enriches, deepens, and grounds our experience.

Cost: \$100, handouts included.

Please register online for this unique multi-day retreat.



---

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

## ANNUAL AIM: THE WAY DRAWS US DEEPER

### INTERBEING: THE DIVINE TAPESTRY

BY STEWART JOHNSON

---

It is not enough to have the good will to serve and suffer. It is also necessary to have new kinds of perceptions, a new understanding of other people [and human life]; otherwise, we are liable to blunder. ... This understanding starts with the understanding of what human life is for.

A great part of Gurdjieff's teaching was concerned with the study and understanding of man – not just as a being to live successfully on this earth, but essentially as a being who has obligations to fulfill and who, through fulfilling these obligations, can fulfill himself.

J.G. Bennett, *Is There "Life" on Earth: An Introduction to Gurdjieff*

*That they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may bring to perfection as one.*

John 17:22-23

Your relation to the Work [of Inner Christianity] and its relation to you are reciprocal.

Maurice Nicoll, "Memory of the Work and Work Memory," *Commentaries*

---

### **The Knowing of Oneness**

Most of us have or have had the feeling or knowing that we are part of something bigger, that we are one with it, and with each other. I am driven by the urge to reconcile this knowing of oneness with the feeling of separation and isolation.

This draws me to spiritual practices. The Divine Therapy opens me more to the reality of Interbeing, and allows the lie of separation to be transformed into the mystery of where diversity is woven together in the Divine Tapestry and how the colors of a rainbow flow seamlessly in and out of each other.

"You will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. ...

If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. ... Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. This

---

---

is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. ... 'To be' is to inter-be. You cannot just be by yourself alone.

Suppose we try to return one of the elements to its source. ... Without 'non-paper elements,' like mind, logger, sunshine and so on, there will be no paper. As thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe in it." Thích Nhất Hạnh

How do we know this more deeply? Bernadette Roberts and others say there is no separate self. I wonder, "What is blocking my knowing and experiencing of Oneness – and living from it?" The lie of separation manifests in the common intolerance of "othering."

### **The Hurt of Othering**

I remember the experience of "othering" between groups of my friends that didn't like, understand, or respect each other. Participating in band, choir, drama, and sports throughout high school brought this to light. A new coaching staff worked to run off all students involved in "other" extracurriculars

and made student-athletes focus on sports only. After more than one hot, exhausting practice, I heard, "If you can't handle this, go join the band or the choir! Uh ... sorry, Johnson."

Hurtful comments and violent names were hurled by my friends towards my "other" friends. I continue to feel and bear it now, in my body, through unloading, healing and integration, especially in the churning of this pivotal, evolutionary age. The collective consciousness of humanity is being plowed, and we are invited to participate in the deep, unutterable groanings and longing for the completeness of the age.

### **Drawn to Differences**

Since my earliest memories, I have been attracted to people who seem the most different from me, as well as to ideas and philosophies that seem in conflict with the thoughts that I ponder and explore, or are in conflict with that which is unexamined in me. Exploring these perceived differences and wrestling with my perceptions and understandings creates something new. The practice of stepping back, and redrawing the question of apparent differences, expands my perception of the separation or contradictory point; and transforms polar opposites into dualistic *complements*. Inside a larger

context, there can be connection and completion. This is in the service of working on acquired conscience.<sup>1</sup> I can wonder:

What do I take for granted?

What is unexamined?

What is creating this apparent other?

### **Neutralizing Force**

This is a practice that can create the possibility for a third option in a conflict or struggle. When I have conflicting ideas, thoughts, plans, etc., when I am in conflict with another person or incoming impression, or when I encounter resistance, wanting something to manifest, I can listen for a "Third" voice, which is inspiration or a new idea that in the moment reconciles conflict. Inwardly, with the lights on, if I wish for something higher and hold and bear the irreconcilable, then something new can be made possible by Third Force. When I am "Third Force Blind," or "Third Voice Deaf," I am unwilling to let go, reexamine or verify my acquired conscience. I am right, the "other" is wrong! I allow the mechanicality of my reactions and responses, and am subject to the lie of separation and the violence of "othering." With

---

<sup>1</sup> Acquired conscience is a vast collection of beliefs, judgments, biases and associations, which is formed in early life. It is different in each of us, according to our upbringing, the time and place we were born, and many other factors.

---

---

Third Force, the Work idea that “if I really understood, I wouldn’t disagree,” becomes alive in me.

Practice has verified that if something that I see in another may also be in me, undigested, unintegrated, and reactive, then I have a different reaction to it, outside of me. Then, I am not moved by desires of payback, violence, judgement, anger, feeling separate or other. Rather, I may feel compassion and understanding, loving instead of judging. The Work of Inner Christianity is a way to die to myself, to *decrease* the function of “self,” transforming my being, and my relationship with my outer world (events, people). I see God moving through Third Force, as the Cause and Source.

### **Diversity Doesn’t Divide Us**

Through the ages, division in the Oneness of *Homo sapiens* into races and subraces, for control and conquering, using geography as false “evidence” of superiority or inferiority, as if one’s lineage or place of origin designates it a “superior race” seems to be part of the human condition.

The error of this resonated with me as a young adult and I began the difficult and life-giving work of exploring what we call privileges. I saw that I had most of them – first world, western, North American, United States

citizen, white, male, breeder/straight, from a comfortable and conservative home in Central Texas, attending a predominately all-white high school, where I heard awful things said about “others.” As I worked on feelings towards people that look like me, I saw that I hated myself – rather, parts of me, some ‘I’s hate other ‘I’s. From this inner work, I get to accept and embrace how I appear in the world of forms, and then let it go, as all “not-I.”

I see us all (even me!) in the Rainbow Flag because we inter-are and the manifestation of diversity in the flag doesn’t divide us, any more than a prism divides and separates one ray of light, except by appearance, or any more than a close up view of a painting separates individual brushstrokes.

This Work cultivates equanimity and external considering. And the experience of Interbeing, through Grace and by practice, allows me to feel my no-thing-ness, and know this as Real I. It is Self Remembering.

From this place, I can understand why Paul tells his followers that if eating meat causes a sister or brother to stumble, don’t eat meat. It’s not about the meat. In Greek, the words translate as “not striking or entrapping.” It is an act of Love to externally consider others.

### **Considering All and Nothing, We Inter-Are**

As acquired conscience continues to be exposed and dissolved, I can experience us all as one in the dog-ball of Love. Ask a friend in your spiritual journey group about the dog-ball, even if you have heard of it, as it is one of the best gifts given to us by our founding ministers. The Dog-ball Theology is worthy to be remembered and discussed.

*If you want to save your life (accomplish all the things the false self is interested in) you’ll bring yourself to ruin. But anyone who brings himself or herself to nothing will find out who he [she] is. Matthew 10:39*

“And who is that? Everything. Nothing is not nothing but no thing, no identity outside of God. By becoming no particular object, you become what God is, which is no particular object, but everything. It is a totally non-possessive attitude towards oneself.

Jesus taught that to be his disciple you need to deny ‘your inmost self.’ That is more crucial than the other things he invites us to separate ourselves from. Any identity at all, apart from

---

---

God, is not it. So to have no identity or an identity that you don't know and are willing that it be anything that God wants it to be, this is what the transformative process is doing. Thus, to want to be anything less than God, is not humility, and does not do credit to God's generosity when he wills to give us not only everything, but God's self." Fr. Thomas Keating

This is my truest identity. And then, there is Stewart with his positionality. Bless his heart. It is "not-I." I can be an anthropologist in the village of Stewart. I am not defined by this manifestation, I am responsible for it.

The collective evolution into self awareness and self reflection (and individual recapitulation of it) stems from the eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Differences in the Garden of Eden as the root of othering and duality. This evolutionary shift was inevitable, making possible relationships, languages, and trade. The most profound part of the story for me is once eaten, the only remedy is the fruit of Life (and unity) from the Tree of Forever. This is Christ, our joining together as cells in the One body. To me, Christ is a *verb*. I give myself to Contemplative practice, I apply the Work to my being, and I am consumed in my consumption

of the elements in the Sacrament of Eucharist, as the Divine Therapy reduces Stewart and enlarges God's territory, and interbeing becomes more and more real to me.

For many of us, this is the only game in town. Once discovering this Way, I am ruined for anything else.

"You are me, and I am you.

Isn't it obvious that we 'inter-are'?

You cultivate the flower in

yourself,  
so that I will be beautiful.  
I transform the garbage in  
myself,  
so that you will not have to  
suffer.

I support you;  
you support me.

I am in this world to offer  
you peace;  
you are in this world to  
bring me joy."

Thích Nhất Hạnh 

---

## 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 32

The Beatitude of poverty of spirit springs from the increasing awareness of our true Self. It is a nonpossessive attitude toward everything and a sense of unity with everything at the same time. The interior freedom to have much or to have little, and the simplifying of one's life-style are signs of the presence of poverty of spirit.

---

---

---

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

## LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

TIME BY NATHAN JONES

---

### **Work Idea:** Time Is Changeable

In *A New Model of the Universe*, Ouspensky writes about a concept he calls Recurrence. This teaching states that our lives are curved and, if nothing changes, upon death we come back to the same place and moment of birth. If we have not changed our being, we return to the same experiences, peoples and surroundings to do it again. This is separate from reincarnation, which speaks of being born again into a different part of time. Nicoll speaks frequently that time is a circle and of the concept of Time-body, about how by Working consciously on yourself now you can alter both the past and future. Additionally, Nicoll speaks of Time and Eternity and shows us the image of the cross. The horizontal line of the cross represents Time from past to future and the vertical line represents Eternity. The experience of Eternity, of now-ness, is always available to us. Let's remember, the Work is about new ideas and their implementation.

### **Work Sources:**

"The more strongly you feel this Work and the more you conceive its meaning in your mind and the more you make yourself distinct from mechanical life through the force of this Work, then not only can you change yourself but also everyone connected with you – even people long ago who are not in your present time. For this reason, the Work teaches that Time is one of the worst illusions that we can come under as ordinarily conceived because how can we help people a long way back? The answer is, by working on yourself now you can change not only yourself but everything, both in the past and in the future, because the future and the past *equally exist*. There is no past and no future if Time is a circle." Nicoll, *Commentaries*, p. 753.

"If you want to change yourself, you must change your grandfather." Gurdjieff

Ouspensky asked, "What is Time?" Gurdjieff replied, "Time is Breath."

### **Application:**

It is difficult for us to have a different sensory experience of Time. The mechanistic clock was culturally offered to us through a Cartesian model of the world as a symbol of time inevitably and consistently marching forward. Einstein proposed the relativity of Time and, regardless of how it feels, one could prove that Time in fact slows down based on experience and perspective. Near the speed of Light time ticks by more slowly. It is not only in the laboratory where time is known to change. People speak of time slowing down in episodes of great danger. Perhaps, in the midst of a car wreck seeing the flicker of a silver coin or flash of broken glass. J. Needleman spoke of time slowing down during significant emotional events like news of the death of a loved one. A flash of eternity, a flicker of consciousness imposed. Who doesn't remember where they were and who it was that delivered the devastating

continued from page 9

news? We've all experienced time shifting in a dream. Ten minutes in waking life can deal a new world of events, people and places in a dream. Time clearly does not always operate at the same pace when we dream. I would offer upon inspection and reflection we can know Time is changeable. The Work offers that the changeability is consistent. Also, Time is curved.

Consider someone close to you (perhaps one who has passed over). Think of an interaction you had with them, ideally, a situation that had big emotions. Apply Work ideas to yourself in this memory. Can you see that this person was not one but (like you) a multiplicity? Can you see that both of you were identified? Can you see that perhaps in that space you nor they were conscious but were acting *unconsciously*? Can you remember, in this memory, the Work aphorism: "You owe me nothing, I owe you everything."? Lastly, Observe, Non-Identify, and Self-Remember. Not for nothing, this is a road that leads to both forgiveness and sometimes the tougher task of letting yourself be forgiven.

**Further Resource:**

Look up and explore the term: *nunc stans*. It relates. 

---

---

## ABOUT SCRIPTORIUM

In the spirit of the Emmaus Road "burning heart" encounter, this ongoing, weekly Saturday 11 a.m. gathering is open to everyone. This year, we are exploring The Gospel of John through the lens of Work ideas and contemplative Christian experience, in the manner of Maurice Nicoll's *The New Man*. No prior biblical knowledge is required – just a willingness to listen, share, learn and grow. Participants are introduced to foundational tools and resources for personal study to deepen Knowledge and Being. Please join by Zoom, the code is on our website.

## ABOUT COMPLINE

This is the last service of the day in the monastic prayer of the hours. Our compline lasts about 15 minutes and includes silence, scripture readings, a reflection on the day, a chant, and the traditional compline blessing. Please join us virtually on Saturdays at 9:00 p.m. The Zoom code is on [www.consciousharmony.org](http://www.consciousharmony.org).

---

## UPCOMING SERMON SERIES

*BEING HUMAN LOVING GOD*

As the Way draws us deeper, we inevitably come to the subject of how we can love God with more of our being. This sermon series will explore some practical ideas from Luke 10:27 on how we might cultivate our God devotion together.

September 6	Love
September 13	God
September 20	With All Your
September 27	Heart
October 4	Soul
October 11	Strength
October 18	Mind

---

---

# NEW WEEKLY OFFERINGS

## EXPLORING WISDOM FROM SPIRITUAL FATHERS, MOTHERS AND MYSTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Deepen your understanding of the richness of the mystical Christian dimension and discover how each generation's mystics, contemplatives and spiritual fathers and mothers have shaped the wealth of our Christian spiritual heritage and how they can inspire our continued devotion and practice today. We will read selected excerpts from the primary historical figures such as Philo, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Marguerite of Porte, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avilla, John of the Cross, and many more.

Starts September 4th, Fridays, 12:30-1:15 p.m.

Find the Zoom code on the website.

## MINISTER'S BOOK STUDY: *THE REAL CHRIST*

Following our Wednesday 6:30 p.m. worship service, join Peter at 7:30 p.m. for a time of reading, commenting and conversation on Bernadette Roberts' masterpiece, *The Real Christ*. All who wish to deepen their understanding of mystical theology and Bernadette's spiritual wisdom are welcome.

Starts September 2nd, Wednesdays, 7:30-8:25 p.m.

Find the Zoom code on the website.

All are welcome!

## SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

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

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Online Vestibules of Centering Prayer Retreat  
Sep 11-14 Fri 6-8pm, Sat-Mon 8am-4pm  
Led by Jim Reale. \$100 Register online.

Online One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat  
Sep 26 9am-3pm  
No cost. Register online.

Online Introduction to Centering Prayer  
Sep 26 10am-noon  
+ 4 consecutive Mondays 7-8:15pm  
No cost. Register online.

Courtyard Communion  
Schedule at [minister@consciousharmony.org](mailto:minister@consciousharmony.org)

### MONTHLY

Caritas Donations  
Please consider making a donation of food  
or money directly to [caritasofaustin.org](http://caritasofaustin.org)

\*Godly Play Parade of Parables Sep 12 1pm

### 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  
\*Minister's Book Study 7:30-8:25pm

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

Fridays  
\*Mystics of Christian Tradition  
12:30-1:15pm

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

### DAILY

\*Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

\*Please 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.

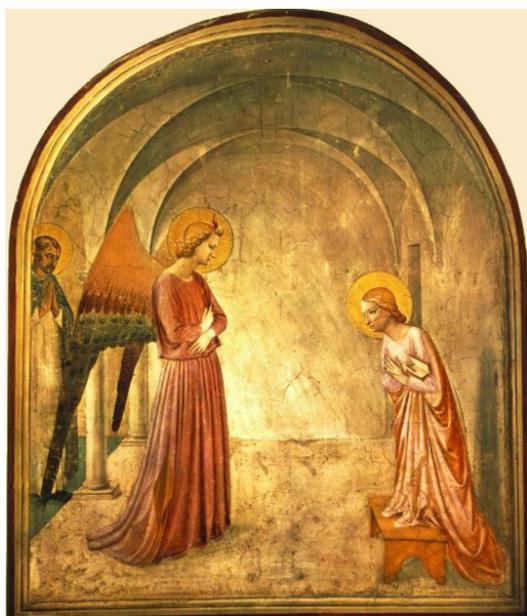
Recordings of services are available online  
at [www.consciousharmony.org](http://www.consciousharmony.org)



THE CHURCH *of* CONSCIOUS HARMONY  
A CONTEMPLATIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY  
7406 NEWHALL LANE AUSTIN TX 78746

NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTIN TX  
PERMIT # 3386

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



*If you make my word your home  
you will indeed be my disciples,  
you will learn the truth  
and the truth shall make you free*

John 8:31-32

## ORDINARY TIME

To those who wish inner freedom,

Jesus tells us to seek the truth of His word.

First we must accept the fact that we are not free.

An honest self-appraisal, a deep look,  
will tell us that we are slaves – to our habits, vices, prejudices,  
intolerances, culture and worldly ideas, and especially  
of the self-image we have created, the idealized self  
which we portray and wish others to believe.

Almost nothing is more difficult than to look  
at ourselves as we really are.

Even more difficult yet is to accept ourselves as God accepts us . . .  
as we really are – yet still loving us.

The way to inner freedom is the way of humility and truth.

We accept ourselves as we are and others as they are  
with simplicity, sometimes with humor, always with love.

We grow into the gift of inner freedom, by listening  
and living out Jesus' Gospel words without fear . . .  
knowing ourselves to be God's children, totally loved by Him.

Brother Victor-Antoine D'Avila-Latourrette, *A Monastic Year*