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# THE MARK

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



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# REFLECTIONS ON RESURRECTION: ORIGINAL. ORIGIN. PARADOX. JOURNEY.

BY PETER HAAS

Each year the Liturgical rhythms bring us through well-defined spiritual seasons of remembrance and focus. Advent and Lent share the purple liturgical color, and both are seasons of preparation related to the life of Jesus the Christ. Advent aims to help us prepare to recognize, receive and respond to the birth of Christ, culminating in the joyful celebration called Christmas. Lent prepares us to journey with Jesus into Christ through the Holy Week events, culminating in the joyful celebration called Easter. As these festivals return annually, it is easy for our valuation of their intentions to dull into rote repetition, year after year.

Since I'm often on the hunt for new ways of apprehending the narrative sweep of the Bible, particularly the key festivals such

as Christmas and Easter, I was delighted to learn that the meaning of the English word Original comes from the Latin verb *Oriri*, meaning "to rise," which refers to the rising of the sun and the moon. Similarly, the Latin noun *Ori*, conveys a unique nuance of the verb to rise. It means rising as in the way a stream rises from its source as rain accumulates. From this perspective, the resurrection then is the original rising and continual flowing as it remains connected to its Source. As St. Paul says, Christ is the *firstborn* of creation (Colossians 1:15) – the first arisen of a large family to come, all of whom, on their own journeys, will join in the arising too.

Perhaps this concept of original is a unique and helpful way of thinking about the resurrection. It is our new origin: a new beginning for the human lineage, the first fruit of

an ongoing flourishing, the original from which all our future risings are simply repeats of the pattern Jesus' resurrection provides. Thus, not only is the resurrection the original event, as in the grounding source from which all further resurrections replicate, but it is the origin of our own spiritual life. Perhaps this is why St. Paul candidly admits that,

*If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ*

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*has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.*

1 Corinthians 15:13-19

In addition to being the original, even the resurrection of Jesus is a paradox. In its historic expression through the narrative of Jesus, it is a new event in human evolution. In its ongoing continuance in human possibility after death, it is ongoing reality, though perhaps not perceived physically, as in the case of Jesus' demonstration. The poet Jane Hirshfield suggests that "the paradox of originality is that it points both to the newly appearing and to a continuance free of time."

The witness and teachings

of Bernadette Roberts clearly articulate that resurrection is but one of the phases of our spiritual journey that happens virtually simultaneously at the time of physical death. So too, she says, does the ascension. This is summed up in her phrase, "as it went for Jesus, so it goes for us." Bernadette helps us see the full sweep of the spiritual journey, starting at the beginning with seeking and ending with ascension. Some poems speak so clearly, while still holding the mystery and preserving the paradox. This translation from Tang dynasty poet Wang Wei offers a glimpse of something that the Lenten journey leads us into, that surprising, original moment resurrection calls us toward all our life:

"In my middle years I became  
fond of the Way  
And made my home in the

foothills of South Mountain.  
When the spirit moves me, I go  
off by myself  
To see things that I alone must  
see.  
I follow the stream to the source,  
And sitting there, watch for the  
moment  
When clouds rise up. Or I may  
meet a friend;  
We talk and laugh and forget  
about going home."

Whatever has or hasn't unfolded on your Lenten journey this year, may the Spirit move you to go off and see things alone that you must see. Follow the stream to the source. Ponder there in silence and solitude. Disappear with the risen friend, and be so present in the moment that you forget the journey. Simply belly laugh in the joy of oneness. Just be. ☺

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# ELDER WISDOM: HONORING OUR FATHERS AND MOTHERS

## FOR OUR GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

BY JILL FRANK

Recently I spent two years in a program at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio exploring the spirituality and wisdom of aging. There are many designations for the stage where we begin letting go of all that we worked for in the first half of life and are invited to shift towards *being* rather than doing. It is an invitation that many discard.

The Church of Conscious Harmony exists to support the journey towards *being* and into “conscious union with the living God.” In our community, elder wisdom is related less to how many years you have walked this earth and more to the years of *Ora et labora* – prayer and Work. We walk on the two legs of Centering Prayer and the Work of Inner Christianity and step into the flow of timeless, ageless Wisdom. In support of this Wish, we are offered the focus, teachings and community that create true elders for those who say yes!

“It is all a matter of learning how to see, and it takes much of our life to learn to see well and

truthfully ... How desperately we need true elders in our world to clean up our seeing.”

Richard Rohr, *Falling Upwards*

In this new monthly column honoring our elders, we will share and receive pearls of wisdom from those in our midst for our own growth and transformation. As I pondered and asked for inspiration this morning, I opened Richard Rohr’s daily meditation entitled “The Fullness of Time” and read, “our ancestors are still in us and work through us.” Indeed, we are nourished as we connect with and honor them through receptivity, deep listening and remembering.

In the silence, the memory of Bob Rader came to meet me. Bob was a founding member of the church and Board member for many years. We were blessed to witness the cycle of diminishment and transformation as he journeyed into Love and died to self and the physical body. I share an experience of elder wisdom with Bob that touched me deeply and speaks to the deep connectivity we feel as we

enter the dimension of Christ.

In his last years, Bob lived in a nursing home on South Congress. Visiting him in the home and driving him to church became deeper and more meaningful over the years as he let go of everything and moved deeper into God. Sharing these moments opened the eyes of my heart to the absolute truth of the “lie of separation.”

One Sunday on our way to church, a homeless man came up to my window and I happened to have something I could share and did so. It was natural and there was no thought involved. Bob had been silent that morning on our ride to CCH. He looked over at me with those deep blue eyes and said, “Thank you dear.” I experienced Christ’s love shining through him and bursting forth in those eyes. I knew Christ’s love always present in and around me, asking to be allowed to shine forth in our world in the simplest moments.

On the way home, it was again a quiet drive. We had no need for small talk. As we approached “The Great Outdoors” garden center, my

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mind went to plants and gardening and my sister who loved that nursery. Out of the silence, Bob asked me a specific question about my sister. How did he know I had a sister and that she loved gardening? It was as if he was with me *in* my thoughts! I gazed into those deep blue eyes and knew – he was, because this was Christ. We were one – no separation, ever present, all knowing love.

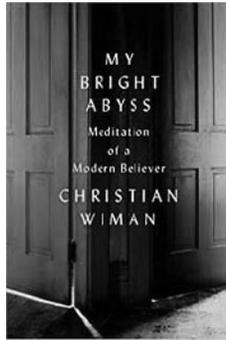
Remembering these moments and what Bob shared with me awakens Christ within. Bob was a lover of people and particularly appreciated women. During a Women’s retreat, we were not surprised when we received word that he had crossed over. We felt his joyful wink – he finally got to go on a Women’s retreat – as he was with so many of us in our hearts!

For this monthly column, we will hear experiences, challenges and memories from various elders in this contemplative community as we open to *this mysterious Unity*. May the eyes of our heart be open to the wisdom and love that surrounds and flows through us all into eternity.

“There is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of all, *Natura naturans*.”

Thomas Merton, *Hagia Sophia* 

## BOOK LOOK



Christian Wiman’s *My Bright Abyss* is a feast of wisdom during Holy Week and Eastertide. So beautiful, poignant and vulnerable in its presentation, you will both find yourself and lose yourself. Part spiritual memoir and part spiritual poetry, Wiman offers a model of articulation for each of our spiritual journeys.

One review said that, “like the classic mystics, Wiman often resorts to a language of paradox to convey things that ordinary language can’t ... The best that can come from contemplation of mortality, perhaps, is a kind of wisdom that can give others strength – not by answering questions ... but by asking questions honestly ...” Another reviewer notes, “here is a poet wrestling with words the way that Jacob wrestled the angel.”

*My Bright Abyss* is both an apologia for faith, as well as a prayer for deepening devotion to God. It’s an invitation from a fellow traveler on the journey to all who suffer, wrestle with the paradoxes of life and death, feel the edge of their Being, and all who nonetheless can’t help but love living in the Mystery that is God. 

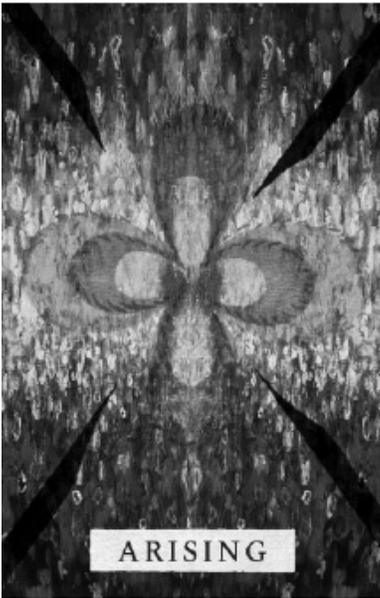
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## GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE, GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Fr. Thomas Keating’s *Open Mind, Open Heart* recommends reading this spiritual journey principle three times in the method of *Lectio Divina*.

### GUIDELINE 39

In the beginning, emotional hang-ups are the chief obstacle to the growth of our *new self* because they put our freedom into a straight jacket. Later, because of the subtle satisfaction that springs from self-control, spiritual pride becomes the chief obstacle. And finally, reflection of self becomes the chief obstacle because this hinders the innocence of divine union.



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*Consecrate us in the Truth. Your word is Truth. John 17:17*

## ANNUAL AIM: TRUTH OPENS THE EYES OF OUR HEARTS

AWAKENINGS BY SUZANNE RITTENBERRY

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Christ was resurrected not only on Easter morn; at-one with the Infinite Christ Consciousness he reanimates himself in the dawn of each soul's awakening. Our souls die every day, whenever we are buried in the tomb of ignorance; we resurrect ourselves again in Cosmic Wisdom. Banish the death consciousness perceived during the sleep of delusion, and resurrect your soul in the ever-reigning Light of Immortality. Let this be your Easter awakening.

Paramahansa Yogananda,  
*The Second Coming of Christ,  
The Resurrection of the Christ Within You,  
Vol. II*

Christ died in order to reveal the resurrection, took to himself a human body so that what was mortal might be transformed into immortality and what was possible into impassibility (Irenaeus).

Bernadette Roberts, *The Real Christ*

*Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one,  
we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.*

1 Corinthians 15:49

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The year 2019 began on a hopeful note with a new yearlong commitment: the Spiritual Journey program at The Church of Conscious Harmony. Never one to make spiritual promises easily or lightly, I thought long and hard before submitting my commitments. Some of them were already ingrained in my behavior patterns, but others required more serious contemplation.

Simultaneously, in my home life, my husband and I started the long-overdue project of completely remodeling the 90-year-old farmhouse we've lived in for two decades. This project was something we had long dreamed of doing, so having the resources to do it was an answer to prayers. Even so, it put months of stress on our nervous systems,

our finances, our marriage, and even on relationships with family and friends. Every day I felt my most familiar negative emotion: "overwhelm."

"Overwhelm" begins for me with a deer-in-the-headlights paralysis and then may quickly morph into depression, frustration, anger, and self-flagellation. Its song is "How can I possibly get through all this? I'm not adequate to the task!" I have a long history with this particular feeling, so a year-long house remodel was the perfect opportunity to learn how to arise and dance with it while not be overtaken by it. I began in daily prayer to ask God to face feeling overwhelmed with me. My mind began to awaken and override the "not adequate" song with a different one: "God gives

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me the resources to face any task that is mine.”

I also observed daily fears around scarcity of time and money. I remembered a Wisdom teacher telling me “When you think you don’t have enough time, give more of it away. When you think you don’t have enough money, give more of it away. This is the only way you’ll know there’s an infinite supply in God’s world.” With this awakening, I committed several hours to CCH every week. In addition to Sunday services and Seva, I attended a Wednesday Journey Group and Contemplative Lunch, Thursday Work of Inner Christianity class and Gurdjieff Movements, Saturday Scriptorium, and daily conversations with a Work partner. Miraculously, my work schedule and house renovation tasks all seemed to fit within this framework.

One evening as I staggered into Lowe’s for yet another piece of hardware, I spotted a fellow Journeyer who was wearily doing the same thing. I knew from hearing him share that he was also stressed by a house remodel, so on that night we exchanged smiles and looks of “I know what you’re going through.” This was like a wink from the Universe, a conscious reminder that spiritual support is all around me.

By late summer, my husband and I were over the hump with the house project and I turned my attention back to my business. Various issues arose that required a great deal more of my energy. It

was at this time that my business partner of many years was diagnosed with a terminal illness. I spent many hours with him and his family, both at home and in the hospital, saying our farewells. In my own home, our favorite dog, Lily, had come to the end of her life as well. In November, we buried both of them. The dance with infinite Consciousness continued.

That Advent season for me was particularly deep and mournful. We continued slowly putting our house back together while I also tackled the heartrending work of removing the many things my business partner had left in his office. The familiar sense of “overwhelmed by stuff” returned, requiring much Centering Prayer and many affirmations. My business continued its decline, but I expected that when my grieving subsided and my energy returned, along with the surge of energy that arises with Spring, the business would come around.

January 2020 brought a new theme in *The Journey School: The Way Draws us Deeper*. I was ready for a new year to begin and ready to go deeper. I once again made a conscious commitment to participate in the Journey School. This time without a Work partner because, despite the gifts I received, it had been a daily struggle to synchronize with my previous partner.

Spring came, my favorite season. Wildflowers proliferated, birds returned, Lent began, and my heart awakened. I began to

feel hope and optimism about my business and a welcome relief from grief and depression. I looked forward to many coming events within the Church as well as gatherings with friends and family. But then, gradually, we began hearing about a “novel coronavirus,” “a pandemic” ... and then suddenly everything was cancelled. Everything. It was very odd. No one knew quite how to act, what or whom to believe, or how long we would be “socially isolating.”

The anxiety of not knowing set in. While my business dropped off to almost nothing, I was suddenly faced with building maintenance emergencies. I applied for a federal loan but became overwhelmed (again!) with red tape. I realized it was time to up my spiritual practice with tithing, and to start saying the Welcoming Prayer and the Abundance Prayer daily. Within a very short time, I awakened and realized that although my business was shaky, many others were in worse shape. My husband and I were stable and I had much to be grateful for. I began earnestly praying for the health and prosperity of others, and giving sincere thanks for all that I had.

By June the wistful thought arose “Why didn’t I sign up for a Work partner? I wish now I had.” As if she had read my thoughts, our Abbess sent an email asking if I would like to take on a new Work partner. It was one of the many blessings of the pandemic: I

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got a partner who was very distant geographically and yet perfectly tailored to what I needed. We bonded and formed a workable schedule almost immediately, and that phone support kept me on track with my spiritual practice during the most-needed time.

One of the great blessings in my life was having my 91-year-old mother living next door. Because she was blind, she had a live-in caregiver who was a joy to all of us. We considered our two houses a “pandemic pod” and managed a social life by sharing meals and by occasionally inviting other family members over for backyard socials. Aside from her vision impairment and her age, my mother was remarkably healthy and sound in her mind.

My mother and I always had what must be described as a competitive and combative relationship. I came to recognize over years of therapy that she had been placed in my life as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Now, the pandemic had narrowed our social outlets and we found ourselves spending much more time together than we ever had. She could no longer attend church with my brother, so she started sitting in on Zoom CCH services and Work classes with me. She became intrigued with the Work and asked many deep questions.

In October, her cardiologist recommended a “minimally-invasive, outpatient procedure.” This did not go as expected. After a two-week stay in the hospital,

she returned home dependent on oxygen, confined to a wheelchair, and needing round-the-clock care. My brother and I started spending nights and weekends with her to relieve her caregiver. We alternated nights and then compared notes daily on her night-time dementia and the number of times she woke us. As we both became sleep-deprived, many emotions arose, remnants of a difficult childhood. We would have breakfast together and vent our feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, fear and anxiety, sessions my husband called the Mama-ramas. We both admitted to yelling at her, and to our feelings of guilt about it.

I continued to receive incredible support from both my Work partner and my Journey Group. Coincidentally, a family therapist who had been working with my mother was also a member of CCH, and she skillfully facilitated a few family meetings in which we were able to speak honestly to one another about the toll it was taking on all of us. Three months ground miserably along, through another mournful Advent and a quiet Christmas. I continued to say the Welcoming Prayer and make efforts daily to consider my mother’s feelings rather than my own. One grumpy morning, a divine thought arose to look at this situation from a distant point in the future and I saw how poignant and sweet it was. I knew then that some day it would become a cherished memory.

On the evening of January 6,

2021, my mother, her caregiver and I watched the news together – a rare experience for us, but one that wrought a sober and thoughtful conversation. We all went to bed and suffered the usual night of her wakefulness. In the morning, I packed my things to go home and went to my mother’s room to ask if she wanted to get up. She smiled and said no, she wanted to sleep. I sat in the kitchen drinking coffee with her caregiver and making plans for the day. We both went back to her bedroom for me to say goodbye for the day, and we realized almost immediately that she was gone.

In the stunned aftermath of her death, my brother and I reflected on the multiple selves in our mother and the multiple selves in us. The alcoholic who terrorized us as kids – that was not her. The doting grandmother who spoiled our own kids – that was not her. The demanding child she became at the end – that was not her. The frustrated woman who screamed ugly words at her helpless mother – that was not I. The good daughter who continued to try to please her mother – that was not I. The poor soul that wanted to run away every single day – that was not I.

I am suffused with love for her. I am overflowing with gratitude. My mother was graced with a beautiful death, and the outpouring of love and affection from friends and family has been overwhelming. Overwhelming in a good way.

What life and death reveals is a gift for my transformation. Welcome, welcome, welcome. 

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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

## ARISING THROUGH SUFFERING BY NATHAN JONES

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**Work Idea:** The Work speaks of different forms of suffering: mechanical, conscious, and intentional. All of sleeping humanity partakes in mechanical suffering. We identify with it and the Work teaches us how to name it. Once it is named, seen and brought into the light, we may begin moving beyond. Disallowing it to distract us daily, stealing our precious, finite energy. Mechanical suffering is the useless accounts we hold against others, the thinking we are unseen, the grudges we build, the perceived heaviness of our daily tasks, the feeling that tomorrow holds the key for today. After seeing these minute forms of mechanical, unconscious suffering, we are then asked to sacrifice this suffering. Let it go and leave it behind. Thereby, freeing us to move toward Conscious Suffering.

**Work Source:** "... this teaching, which belongs to the Fourth Way, begins in regard to what you have to give up. Not with your sin in

any ordinary sense, but with what the Work regards as a great, even perhaps the greatest sin – namely, being identified with ‘Mechanical Suffering’... The Work teaches that mechanical suffering is useless – it leads to nothing – but that conscious suffering leads to inner development.” Also, “Some people suffer if they cannot have their own way even in the smallest detail; even if it rains when they want to go out they suffer. So everything becomes an increasing burden.” Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, pp. 1240-1241, 1062.

**Application:** Observe a reoccurring negative thought that arises daily. Observe what it is that feels slighted. Notice the thoughts that arise and the negative direction you turn. When we give way to these thoughts, our whole center of gravity has a negative proclivity. Through these thoughts and identifications, we descend into a negative state that

can touch everything. Non-identify with the associated feelings. Let go and Self-Remember. Do this daily!

**Further Resource:** Ponder these ideas Gurdjieff conveyed:

“This Work is Esoteric Christianity.”

“People imagine they have something to sacrifice. There is only one thing they have to sacrifice and that is their suffering.”

“A person in this Work must eventually begin to know what Conscious Suffering is compared with Mechanical Suffering.” 

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## 2021 ANNUAL AIM READING

*EYE OF THE HEART*

BY CYNTHIA BOURGEAULT



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## OUR MONTHLY PRACTICE: SILENCE

The monthly practice for April is Silence. That may seem like an obvious practice for an intentional contemplative community grounded in twice-daily Centering Prayer; however, silence is more than a daily meditative prayer practice. Silence is also a kind of stillness.

Here's a lovely quote from a 9th century contemplative monk named Saint Ephrem:

"There is a silence of the tongue, there is a silence of the whole body, there is the silence of the soul, there is the silence of the mind, and there is the silence of the spirit ... The silence of the spirit is when the mind ceases even from stirrings caused by spiritual beings and when all its movements are stirred solely by Being; in this state it is truly silent, aware that the silence which is upon it is itself silence."

This month, explore the different dimensions and levels of silence. Start with the physical silence of a quiet place. Then, explore the stillness of silence Next, explore the deeper dimensions of silence, such as the silence of the inner spirit of yourself. Take rest in the different silences of your life and practice. ☸

## EASTERTIDE CHRISTOPHANY SERIES

The Journey School is offering a seven-week exploration of Christophany, the emerging vision of wholeness at the intersection of science, spirituality and contemplation as revealed by Ilia Delio, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and others.

The group will Zoom for weekly readings, dialogue and exercises for growing awareness of Christ at the center of all aspects of physical creation including the cosmos, the biosphere and the human person. Brian Graham, who serves on the Board of Directors of Ilia Delio's Center for Christogenesis, will facilitate.

If you have been in The Journey School since 2020 and have at least 3 years of Centering Prayer/meditation experience, please send a brief paragraph describing why you wish to participate and your aim to [tjs@consciousharmony.org](mailto:tjs@consciousharmony.org) by April 5. Reading Ilia's book, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being*, is recommended. The Christophany Series will meet on Zoom, Sundays from 3:00-4:30 p.m. from April 11-May 23 (Pentecost Sunday).

# HOLY WEEK WITH THE CHURCH OF CONSCIOUS HARMONY

You are invited to join us for these sacred events online,  
in person in the CCH Sanctuary, or via Zoom.  
Where indicated, please preregister.

March 28, Palm Sunday	6:00 pm Gurdjieff Music†
April 1, Maundy Thursday	7:00 pm Taizé (online only)
April 2, Good Friday	Noon Worship†
April 2-4, Prayer Vigil	1pm Friday-6am Sunday (Online, register for 30-minute time slots)
April 3, Holy Saturday	9-noon Half-Day Online Retreat (Register on website)
April 4, Easter Sunday	6:30 am Sunrise Service† 8:00 am Lectio Divina (online only) 10:00 am Easter Worship†

†These events are held both in person in the CCH Sanctuary  
and broadcast live online.

## APRIL SERMON SERIES: A DEEPER SEEING

April 2, Good Friday	<i>The Darkness</i>	John 18-19
April 4, Easter	<i>The Light</i>	John 20:1-9
April 11, 2nd Sunday of Easter	<i>The Wounds</i>	John 20:19-31
April 18, 3rd Sunday of Easter	<i>The Fears</i>	John 6:16-21
April 25, 4th Sunday of Easter	<i>The Truth</i>	John 10:11-18

## APRIL CALENDAR

For more details, visit  
consciousharmony.org or call 512-347-9673

### SPECIAL EVENTS

- Holy Week See left for details
- Half-Day Online Centering Prayer Retreat  
Apr 3 9am-noon Register online
- Easteride Christophany Series  
Apr 5 Deadline to apply  
See left for prerequisites  
Sundays, Apr 5-May 23 3-4:30pm
- One-Day Online Centering Prayer Retreat  
Apr 17 9am-3pm Register online
- \*Annual Meeting  
Board of Directors & Community  
Apr 25 11:30am-12:30pm

### MONTHLY

- Caritas Donations  
To continue our long standing partnership,  
please consider making a donation of food  
or money directly to caritasofaustin.org
- \*Saturday Morning Parable Cartoon Show  
Apr 10 11am

### WEEKLY

- Sundays  
\*Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am  
\*Intercessory Prayer 9am  
†^Worship Service 10-11:30am  
\*\*Youth Program 1pm
- Wednesdays  
†Contemplative Worship Service 6:30-7:15pm
- Thursdays  
\*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm
- Saturdays  
\*Scriptorium 11am  
\*Compline 9-9:15pm

### DAILY

- \*Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

\*Please join these services, groups, and classes via  
online video conferencing. Contact the website  
for accessible links and more information.

† Open for in-person in CCH sanctuary

^ Sign up online to attend in person

\*\* Contact youthdir@consciousharmony.org for code



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## RESURRECTION

ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!

Anyone who responds to the sound of the 'Alleluia' with the sheer experience of oneness with Christ has understood the Resurrection. Those who have not yet experienced this union should have no doubt, no hesitation, that God is calling them to this experience. ... Eternal life has begun in us. We are the sons [and daughters] of God, incorporated into Christ's body. His Spirit dwells in us. All our sins are forgiven. The darkness of our ignorance and the weakness of our will are being healed. ... It only remains for us to become what we are and to enjoy what we possess.

Thomas Keating, *Awakenings*

