



THE MARK

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A Taste for Surrender

by Tim Cook

When I saw that our study this month is on the disposition of surrender, I felt overjoyed at the opportunity to explore the idea with you. Since the first time I heard the word in a spiritual context, it has always literally made my heart leap for joy and filled me with a sense of relief and release. I pray that I will be able to share some of what God has taught me about surrender and why I am so enthusiastic about this disposition. Learning together in our community is one of the ways we are joining together with and through Christ in the regeneration of our lives and the life of the human race. The disposition of surrender is fundamental to regeneration.

I learned a long time ago, though, that not everyone is so turned on by the idea. At first that really surprised me. I was talking with a teacher at ministerial school; when the subject of surrender came up, I gushed, “Oh, whenever I hear that word it makes my heart sing.” My teacher’s response amazed me but it also taught me a valuable lesson on expectations. She responded with, “Well it makes my spine go stiff.” Seeing the obvious astonishment on my face, she went on to explain the cause of her

seemingly unspiritual reaction. In her earlier life, she had been married to an abusive man to whom she had been urged by members of her family to surrender, “for the good of the family.” By association, she now automatically felt an overwhelming sense of injustice and indignant outrage whenever the word “surrender” was spoken in her vicinity. I remembered that all words carry the accumulated baggage of our prior experiences with them and that none of us understands any word in exactly the same way.

You might find it useful to pause for a moment and reflect on the word “surrender” in your own experience. Does it have accumulated associations that burden it with negativity? Does it carry overtones of loss or shame? By becoming aware of our automatically acquired point of view, pondering it and remembering how we came to it, we open ourselves to the possibility of seeing this liberating disposition and relating to it in a new, spiritually powerful light.

As it is commonly used, surrender brings up pictures of cops and robbers, cowboys and war. Hands over the head or white flag on a stick, someone has been defeated

and humiliated. The enemy has won and someone has been overwhelmed and lost. The dictionary gives a definite boost for those implications: “acceptance of despair...verbal act of admitting defeat...give up or forego the power or possession...relinquish possession or control over...relinquish to the power of another...yield to the control of another.” All of these give rise to images of experiences we would not want to have. Unless...

Unless the “other” we are speaking of surrendering to is not a policeman, a soldier or a conquering emperor, but the God that only loves us and that has always been our own deepest True Self. In the case of man and God, there is no other action in the world more worthy of attention than that surrender. Since we are two-fold beings, we have a part of our present experience that is turned toward the world revealed by our senses, and we have another aspect that is the Divine, and therefore always present but invisible to the senses. We are accustomed to the world’s way of attending to and identifying with the superficial, objective, material aspect of our experience and not noticing the deeper Presence that is our true identity and Reality.

The disposition of surrender to



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God actually entails letting go of our surface identity, the false-self, in order to directly realize and live from the true Self, moved and informed by the Holy Spirit. We are surrendering to Ourselves! How hard could this be? How could this be threatening? What could we lose but our feelings of isolation, separation and lack of meaning?

Surrender is more than an act that we come to once and forever; "OK, I surrender." It is a process of many small acts of letting go, not demanding our way and trusting in Divine Providence. As a process it offers countless opportunities each day to renew the disposition, to start again and to learn and grow from each encounter with ordinary life. We develop the capacity to live this Way through a commitment to a lifestyle that has an unshakable commitment to daily spiritual practice. This unwavering commitment comes not from some attempt to "do it right" or to "be good" but from simply understanding how life works and wishing to live in harmony with Reality.

As for the "how to" part, the tools are all here and available in the Work of Inner Christianity and Centering Prayer. The Work teaches

us the way of internal insight and empowers us to dismantle the false-self and stand free of the loveless, mechanized conditioning that runs most of our lives. Centering Prayer opens our minds and hearts to the Divine Indwelling. It cleanses our personal unconscious of the undigested emotional junk of our childhood and develops an experiential, ever-deepening relationship with the Living God. CCH offers classes and community support in both Centering Prayer and the Work of Inner Christianity and our library and bookstore are overflowing with the necessary educational materials to light the way. A most necessary part of a living disposition of surrender is the willingness to learn and practice the basics.

Our culture, which is neither happy nor free, values holding on to our positions and holding out against our seeming vulnerability. It does not have a taste for the disposition of surrender. God, who is happiness and freedom, is constantly offering us the opportunity to surrender our positions to his Life. Surrendering to his Presence, our True Self, Christ, is an acquired taste, but one that is well worth developing. 

Lent: Decreasing Self to Increase Christ

by Barbara Cook

I have learned to look forward to Lent. It gives me the focused intention and a community, actually global company, to practice with. I try on the traditional practices of additional prayer, fasting and alms, doing all of it with the hope of letting go of self-centeredness. The intense focus during the 40 days of Lent makes it possible for more awareness of God and others.

I have had the grace of being able to attend the CCH Lenten 10-day retreat ever year. I say it is grace because I am very aware that having such an event so close to my home is an unusual gift. I feel so fortunate that I am supported in my ability to attend and that I can say “yes!” to the invitation to be there. I share 10 silent days in the spiritual desert with like-minded friends in God and I am inspired by our combined willingness toward God.

Our schedule gives us four hours of Centering Prayer a day.

The time in prayer is a luxury that I cannot do on my own at home. For four hours, I am just being with God uninterrupted, heart-to-heart and cheek-to-jowl as our beloved Thomas Keating says. During the whole time of that retreat, I am able to be with God in the simplicity of the desert with nothing else to do in the uncluttered time and space of the retreat center. There I can let go of the outer things that hold Barbara in place. Retreats give my self a break from my self and when the self is at rest there can be more room in my attention for God. The experiences a person has on retreat are soul changing and they have enabled me to develop intimacy with God.

Another Lenten gift I give my self is fasting, except while I am on retreat because retreat is already a fast from ordinary life. Usually, I'll fast from radio in the car and TV at home to leave space for God to speak in the greater silence. I'm also able hear

my inner jabber more clearly. And I like to do some kind of food fast too. That usually provides me with a window on Barbara's addictions around that gratification. Typically after several days of observing that inner landscape, the fog clears and I find myself with more focus and energy for prayer and generosity toward the world.

Almsgiving is another way to remind me of the great body of Christ. Usually that involves consciously and generously donating to some of the organizations that serve those in need. That ties me to my other cells, my sisters and brothers in the body of Christ.

Along with the diminishment of self, I am always given greater awareness of God's presence. And my desire for more intimacy with Him grows as we move closer to the Easter celebration of the passion of Christ and the Alleluias that ring out on Easter Sunday.

By the time you read this, Lent will be here and you will be doing your Lenten offerings. I wish you special blessings and graces that you might be able to let go of more of yourself and open more fully to the Christ in you, your hope of Glory. ☉

Multi-Day Centering Prayer Retreats at Cedarbrake

June 19-28 10-day \$825

June 19-23 5-day \$425

June 23-28 6-day \$495

Contact the office to register.



All of us ... are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Annual Aim: The Self

Know Thyself

Self-Surrender by Anna Wallace

To follow the Lord
to the cross means this:
Every day surrender yourself
– body and soul –
... to do the work of the Father,
wherever He leads you
and whatever it costs you.
And each day God will lay out
the work you must do.
That is His part.
Your part is to forsake the life
you would choose for yourself
and follow Him
to do what He shows you to do.
... And by this practice,
you will pass beyond the cross
... from death to life
and have entered
the Kingdom
of the Father.

*Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever hears my word and believes in the one
who sent me has eternal life and
... has passed from death to life.*

John 5:24

My name is Anna. This is my story. We all have our story. But, I always thought that my story was more special than everyone else. I know it well. I would tell it to anyone who'd listen.

I was born in Vietnam at the height of the Vietnam War. I had a lovely, typical childhood. I had playmates, school mates and wonderful childhood friends. I played hopscotch, hide-and-seek, and “jacks” with my friends (only we did it with chopsticks). I remember a lot of laughter and joy. All the typical

childhood memories were there.

The only atypical parts of my childhood were the bomb raids and the sounds of the guns going off in the distance. I watched my classmates die in those raids. I watched children wander the streets looking for their parents. There was much suffering intermingled with the innocence of this childhood.

Living in a country at war greatly impacted me and my views on compassion and love. At age 8, I decided that I needed to find something to alleviate suffering. I

decided to become a doctor. I felt that this was my calling. Doctors can travel across borders, racial lines... the entire world. Doctors can help anyone and everyone. Their skills would be needed anywhere there was suffering. I saw many tears and I just wanted to hold them close and ease their pain. It did not matter who they were. There was no "other" to me.

At age 8, I also left Vietnam. But not before watching, from a place of privilege, the chaos, as my family was safely aboard the vessel to take us away. It was difficult to see parents who would sacrifice separation from their children pushing them into helicopters, ships, and airplanes in hopes that their children could be saved and perhaps, have a better life. My heart ached for them.

We immigrated to the United States. My father was allowed to choose anywhere to live in America because of his service to the U.S. during the Vietnam War. He chose Kansas. Why, you might ask? Because Kansas is right smack in the middle of the U.S.A., far away from any foreign invasion; he had said, "Let's see if the communists can invade Kansas now!"

However, it was there, in the Midwest, where I first learned that I was "other." I looked different. I spoke differently. Growing up in Kansas wasn't the "lovely, typical childhood" I had experienced before we moved. I didn't fit in. We were

the first Vietnamese family to arrive in the little town. Desperate to fit in, I started to build a case for my "self." I had to do everything better; be funnier, be smarter. Soon, I was at the top of my game. I graduated from high school and college with honors. I became vice-president of my freshman class. I earned multiple awards during medical school and residency. I was successful in building a "name" for my "self." Titles to come included Chief of Medicine, Board Member, and Medical Director. I felt it was only then that I was accepted. Acceptance came with a price. I needed to keep doing more and more in order to feel accepted; at least, that was what the "self" wanted. Approval was acceptance. I was dependent on it. That was my drug. I was addicted to it. My zest for my role as physician depended on it. After all, this was my "calling." My identification to my role as a physician magnified. The "self" glorified in it. But there was never enough. I was in my "prison," as Anthony De Mello puts it. I became addicted to approval, but was not aware of it...I was asleep to it all. Horribly unfulfilled despite my "success," I went searching for meaning.

I found The Church of Conscious Harmony by pure accident...or was it? I embraced the two "legs" of the church immediately. Centering Prayer gave me the gift of silence.

From this silence, God came. Father Thomas Keating stated in *Open Mind, Open Heart*,

"Centering prayer is an entrance into the process that leads to divine union. The root of prayer is interior silence."

The second "leg" of the church is the Work of Inner Christianity. I enrolled in the Simple Explanation of Work Ideas class. I remember how I felt when I was first told I was a multiplicity. I thought to myself, "What are you talkin' about? These people are way out there! What have I gotten myself into?" "But wait," I continued, "'who' *was* talking? 'Who' just put those words in my head?" They asked me to observe my thoughts and feelings and take notice. If I am observing and hearing these words in my head, who is talking and who is observing? I realized, "Oh my God, they are in my head! Oh no! I am a multiplicity!" I needed to learn, know, and understand more...

So, what happens when one starts to do self-observation? All of these parts I took as my identity started to shrink. Slowly, my identification to what I thought was "me" started to die. With it, my connection to my "calling" died. In its place, there was a tremendous feeling of emptiness. I felt lost. I have been working my whole life towards what I thought was God's gift to me, my "calling." I was special, wasn't I? Suddenly, I was nothing. For months, this dark

feeling wouldn't go away. I lost my purpose. The "calling" that had me thinking I was special was all but an identification this "self" created. It felt like I had even lost God. There was nothing but emptiness...a void, which could not be filled by anyone or anything. I had to surrender it all to God.

It was timely that Tim Cook, our minister, introduced *The Experience of No Self* and *The Path to No Self* books by Bernadette Roberts. I hung on to Roberts' words. Slowly, it started to make sense. With Tim's help, I realized I still have a calling to this vocation. It was my motivation that had changed. At 8, my motivation was pure. I just wanted to love and to take away pain and suffering. At 20, 30, and 40, my motivation was for the success of "building the case for self." I had to go back to that original calling. I had to shed layers that covered over that true motivation. I had to let these identifications die! I had to go through what John of the Cross called the Dark Nights. Of course!

How do I serve now that that part of the self is gone? How does one function in the external world when identification dies? Roberts says, "Look for the extraordinary in the ordinary." I get it! It is holding someone's hand when they are experiencing pain. It is hugging someone when they are experiencing sorrow. It is sharing a laugh in the

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 will appear in these pages each month

8th Guideline



Grace is the presence and action of Christ
at every moment of our lives.

The sacraments are ritual actions
in which Christ is present in a special manner,
confirming and sustaining the major commitments of our Christian life.

midst of this human condition.


"I am convinced we continually see this Reality all our lives but do not recognize it because it is so common, and ordinary that we go off in search of more tantalizing experiences—experiences more gratifying to the self." (Bernadette Roberts)

My name is Anna. I am letting go of my story. I am not "my story." As H. Emilie Cady puts it so well in her book *Lessons in Truth*,

"I am Spirit, perfect, holy, and

harmonious."

Unless one sees this in oneself, one cannot see it in others. One cannot see Oneness. I am Spirit, just as you are. There is no other story to tell. We are One. Roberts summarizes perfectly in *The Experience of No-Self* when she says,

"God or life was not in anything. Everything was in God. There is no separation. As soon as you let go of the notion of separateness, everything falls back into the wholeness of God and life." 

Complete Surrender to His Grace

We must keep ourselves detached from all we feel or do if we are to travel along his path and live only for God and the duties of the present moment. We must stop all imaginings about the future, keep our attention on what is happening now and not bother about anything that has gone before or what may follow. I imagine that God's will always governs you. You will then have some inner prompting which makes you say: "I feel drawn toward this person or this book; I would like to give another person some advice or ask for some myself; I wish to complain about something, to open my heart to someone and in turn receive confidence, to give something away or to perform a certain action." We should at once obey these promptings of grace without relying on our reason or considering the matter at all. We must give ourselves to whatever God wishes and for as long as he wishes and yet never get personally involved in them. In this condition of self-abandonment the will of God moves us because he dwells within us, and it should completely replace everything on which we usually rely for strength and support. There is never a moment when there is not

some virtue to be practiced, and as abandoned souls, we shall remember all that we have learned through reading and discussion so that the most obedient of novices could not fulfill her duties better. This is why we are sometimes impelled to read various books, and prompted to make some comment and give our opinion on the most trifling matter. At one moment God gives us the desire to instruct ourselves in what, at a later moment, will help us to act virtuously. But whatever we do, we do it because we are drawn to this particular action without knowing why. All we can say can be reduced to this: "I feel drawn to write, to read, to question and examine. I obey this feeling, and God, who is responsible for it, thus builds up within me a kind of spiritual store which, in the future, will develop into a core of usefulness for myself and for others." This is what makes it essential for us to be simple-hearted, gentle, compliant and sensitive to the slightest breath of these almost imperceptible promptings.

If we have abandoned ourselves, there is only one rule for us: the duty of the present moment. The soul is as light as a feather, as fluid as water, simple as a child and as lively as a


ball in responding to all the impulses of grace. We are like molten metal which takes the shape of the mold into which it is poured, and can just as easily assume any form God wishes to give us. We are like the air which stirs continually, or water which fills every vessel no matter what its shape.

We must offer ourselves to God like a clean, smooth canvas and not worry ourselves about what God may choose to paint on it, for we have perfect trust in him, have abandoned ourselves to him, and are so busy doing our duty that we forget ourselves and all our needs. The more closely we devote ourselves to our little task, which is so simple, so secret and so hidden and apparently so paltry, the more does God enrich and adorn it: "God works wonders for those he loves" (Ps. 4:3).

It is true that a canvas simply and blindly offered to the brush feels at each moment only the stroke of the brush. It is the same with a lump of stone. Each blow from the hammering of the sculptor's chisel makes it feel—if it could—as if it were being destroyed. As blow after blow descends, the stone knows nothing of how the sculptor is shaping it. All it feels is a chisel

chopping away at it, cutting it and mutilating it. For example, let's take a piece of stone destined to be carved into a crucifix or a statue. We might ask it: "What do you think is happening to you?" And it might answer: "Don't ask me. All I know is that I must stay immovable in the hands of the sculptor, and I must love him and endure all he inflicts on me to produce the figure he has in mind. He knows how to do it. As for me, I have no idea what he is doing, nor do I know what he will make of me. But what I do know is that his work is the best possible. It is perfect. I welcome each blow of his chisel as the best thing that could happen to me, although, if I'm to be truthful, I feel that every one of these blows is ruining me, destroying me and disfiguring me. But I remain unconcerned. I concentrate on the present moment, think only of my duty, and suffer all that this master sculptor inflicts on me without knowing his purpose or fretting about it."

Yes, you frank and precious souls, leave to God what is his business and carry on peacefully with your work. Be quite sure that whatever happens to your spiritual life or to your activities in the world is always for

the best. Let God act, and abandon yourself to him. Let the chisel and the brush do their work, even though the brush covers the canvas with so many colors that, instead of a picture, it seems there is only a daub. Let us work together with the will of God by a steady and simple submission, a complete forgetfulness of self and concentration on our duties. Let us go straight ahead. Never mind the lack of a map, ignore the lie of the land and take no notice of the places you pass through. Keep going and you will attain all you desire. Everything will be given to you if, with love and obedience, you seek God's kingdom and his righteousness. There are many people who are uneasy and ask: "Who will guide us toward that mortification of self which will lead us to perfect holiness?" Well, leave them to ransack books in an effort to find a formula to help them. Let us stay united with God by love and let us walk blindly along the clear straight path of duty. His angels protect you, and if he wants more from you he will let you know. 

Jean-Pierre de Caussade, translated by John Beevers, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, pages 80-83. Caussade was an eighteenth-century French Jesuit priest and spiritual writer. His teachings focus on the necessity of loving God and surrendering ourselves to Him completely.

MARCH CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

March 21
Contemplative Outreach United in Prayer Day
9 am-3 pm
Seminary of the Southwest
\$25 preregister at www.heartoftexas-co.org

MONTHLY

1st Sunday
Bring non-perishables for Caritas

March 31
Gurdjieff Music 7:30-8:30 pm
Special date as a part of Holy Week

WEEKLY

Sundays
Lectio Divina 8-9 am
Worship Service 10-11:30 am
Youth Program 10-11:30 am
Fellowship 11:30 am

Wednesdays
Prayer Circle 9:15-10 am
Contemplative Lunch noon-1 pm
Communion Service 6-7 pm

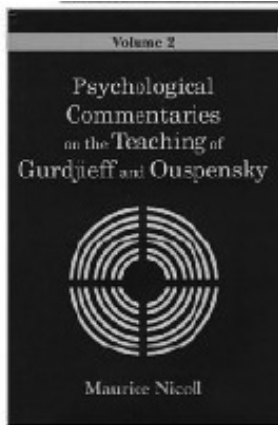
Thursdays
Work of Inner Christianity Class 7:30-9 pm

Fridays
Devotional Service 7:30-8:45 pm

DAILY

Mondays-Fridays 7-7:35 am
Centering Prayer Service in Theosis Chapel

Recordings of services are available
through the Bookstore and online at
www.consciousharmony.org



The Work of Inner Christianity

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

Beauty and Connecting with Higher Centers

Unless you feel the beauty of the Work, unless you desire it as something lovely, it cannot make right contact with you, which is to say, in short, that you cannot make contact with Higher Centers.... What we feel is beautiful we *will*, but if we do this Work through a sense of duty we have got it wrong, although at first we can start like this.

Let me tell you a little secret. It is very wonderful when you realize that you have a right not to be negative. Note the words—not “to have no right to be negative”. It is a most beautiful experience. In this connection let us now take the subject of identifying. I say simply to you that it is wonderful to begin to see that you need not identify with all the things with which you are identified.... Suppose at this moment when I observe myself I notice I am identified with wondering whether I should get another bottle of medicine, whether the medicine does me much good, whether I

should eat more or eat less, whether I should go away for my health’s sake for a time, whether I should order a warm suit for next winter, whether I should really cut down my smoking or not, whether X is any good in the Work, or Y, whether I should put my foot down somewhere or not, and so on. Now that is a résumé of my power of self-observation at the moment, which you should all have. With all these things that I have mentioned as the victim, I am identified to a certain extent, and all this is taking force from me the whole time. Now it is a very beautiful thing to realize, as you will after a time, that you need not be identified with these small things....

Now every act of non-identification saves force. It requires a conscious act which simply means that you become conscious that you are identified with something and you draw force from it and cease to identify. To identify means that force is taken away from you: to

non-identify means that you take the force away from what you identify with. Now you cannot non-identify without a certain degree of Self-Remembering. As you know, external life makes us identify everywhere and at every point. You go and shout and scream at football matches or you are frightfully worried about the Korean situation. But it is quite useless. You can learn nothing from being identified. In fact, it stops you from understanding anything. The more you are identified with someone in the name of trying to help them, the less you will understand them. So therefore I say to you that there is great beauty in realizing that identifying, as the Work says, is the only emotion we know, the emotion of being identified. I repeat, there is great beauty in realizing that it is unnecessary to be identified and you have the sanction of the Work not to identify. Here lies great beauty and it has something to do with connecting with Higher Centers eventually. I will

Why We Must Suffer

In the divine plan, there is but one man—Ecce Homo; but one truth, one way, one life. *Ego sum via, veritas et vita ... I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.* Everyman, loved by God must become one with that Man, know that Truth, follow that Way, and enter into that Life.

To give that supreme grace to each one of us, God stops at nothing. There are times when He will turn the whole world upside-down if thereby one single soul may come to resemble His divine Son more. That is all He wants, that is all he can want: the whole plan of divine Providence is directed to that end. All that happens to us must be regarded in the great light of this final end. That is why we all suffer—to become ‘other Christs’; to be Jesus over again, and, like Him, misunderstood, persecuted, and made to bear our cross. Looked at from any other point of view, suffering would be incomprehensible and intolerable. On the other hand, when we contemplate our divine Example—He, the Truth and the Life—suffering assumes a beauty which is the loveliest thing God has permitted here below, just as death is the most living of the realities of this life.

To find joy in sorrow, life in death—that is the great secret by which our wounds are healed...but you won't find it in any of your text-books! ☸

A Carthusian, *They Speak by Silences*, pages 76-77.

repeat again: it is not merely that you must not identify, because that puts it in the form of a commandment. There are no commandments of that kind in this Work. The beauty lies in realizing that *you have a right not to be negative*—and without that realization you cannot remember yourself. All Self-Remembering has to do with the fact that you came down to this earth and life here does not correspond with what you came

down from: and something in you knows it—that is, has not forgotten it: and that means *remembers it*. Identifying makes everything ugly. But the sense of beauty connects us with the two worlds of spirit and matter and so has to do with the intermediary.... ☸

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, pages 1477-79. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the *Work of Inner Christianity* class held Thursdays 7:30-9 p.m.

CCH Bookstore

Titles supporting Self-Surrender



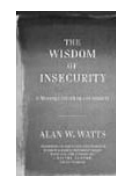
Letting Go
The Pathway of Surrender
by Dr. David Hawkins



Humble Pie
St. Benedict's Ladder of Humility
by Carol Bonomo



Forty Years After Gurdjieff
A Guide to Practical Work
by John Fuchs



The Wisdom of Insecurity
A Message for an Age of Anxiety
by Alan Watts

Bookstore and Library Hours

Monday-Friday 9 am-4 pm

Sunday 9:30-10 am & 11:30 am-noon



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Deeper into Lent

The heart of the Christian journey is to face the unconscious values
that underlie our motivation,
that we're not normally aware of in everyday life
and where, through the observance of Lent,
we face the human condition in ourselves at new and deeper levels.
It's like the church and the Christian communities all over the world
entering into a 40-day retreat, like Jesus did in the desert.

And we need Lent and practices to purify our unconscious.
These things hinder us from answering the call to divine union
that is the basic invitation of the whole of the Christian gospel and life ...
and allowing God to be God in us
and consenting to letting Him work in us ever more completely
and that is my prayer for us all.

Thomas Keating, recorded conversation for Lent, February 9, 2015

