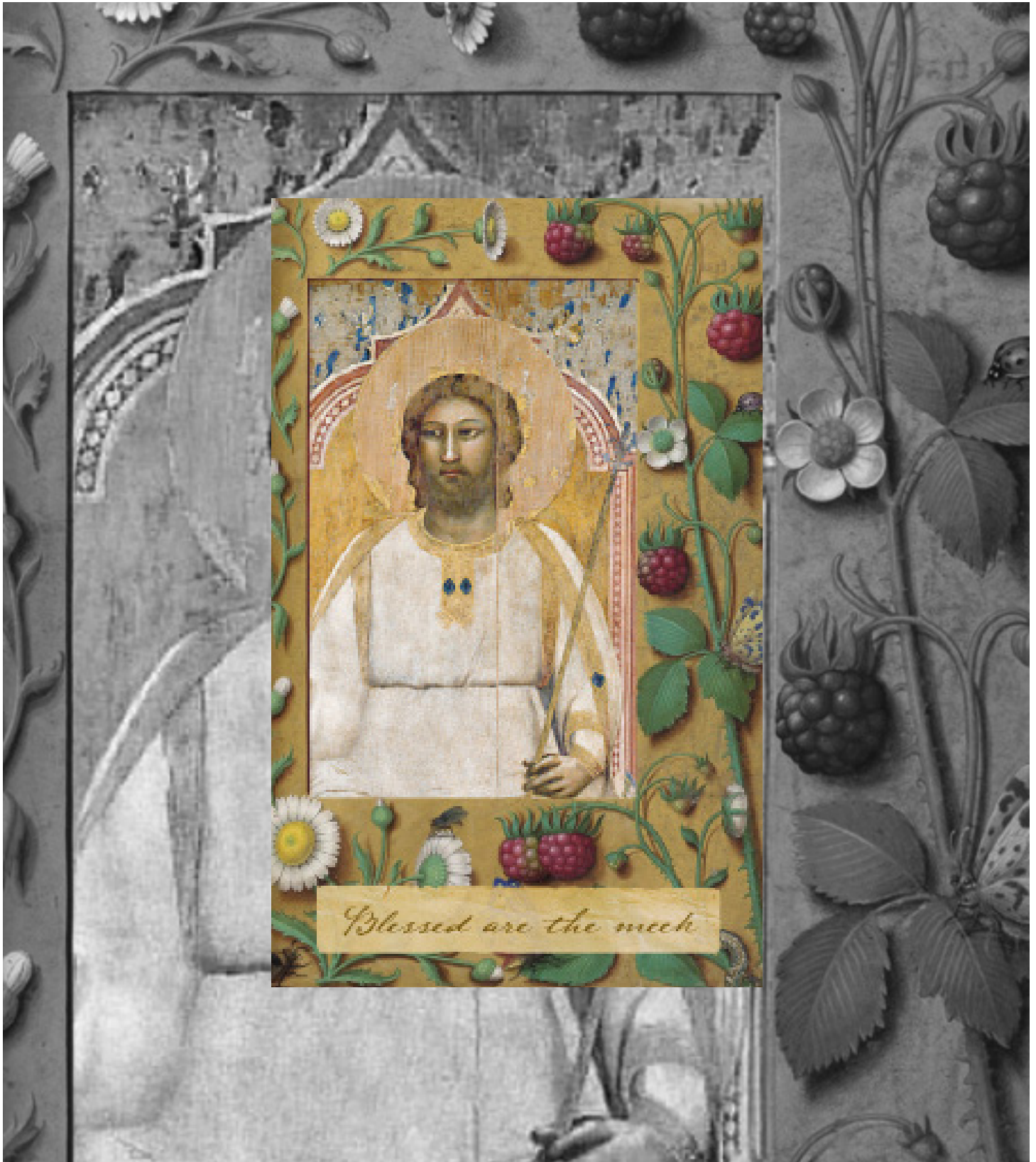


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Volume 28
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THE MARK

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



OUR LADY OF THE YES

by Tim Cook

“In my search to see reality in myself, I may come to the door of perception. But it will not open, truth will not be revealed, so long as I cling to what I know. I need empty hands to approach the unknown.” That profound offering by Jeanne de Salzmann reminds me of the image that we’ve chosen for this year’s annual aim “Blessed” – the same icon of Mary that is in our sanctuary. Her upraised hands are absolutely and utterly empty. She holds nothing, resists nothing. She is not getting, grabbing, holding or keeping anything nor is she protecting herself, covering her face or looking away. She is consenting to God. Her hands are raised toward heaven; empty of anything from the world but filled with naked faith. And right in the center of her body appears the manifested body of the Risen Christ in his eternally young adult manifestation, fully human, fully Divine, seated in his teaching posture.

If my quieted soul simply receives her image deeply within, mentally thinking about it as little as possible, this image has the extraordinary capacity to give my soul a **concept** or a mental and emotional form around which my

soul can begin to **conceive** and give birth to that form within my own body. The icon suggests a form to quietly **conceive** in my soul. Without an **eternal concept** to **conceive** of, my soul cannot conform itself to the Truth of God. It will just, as usual, mechanically reflect on and conform itself to images of the apparently dualistic world outside and around me. Our Lady of the Sign is a mirror of hope for me, revealing to me the gesture, the spiritual posture, my soul must receive and assume to actually experience the Truth of God in myself. She reveals the possibility of real, utter surrender to God within and without. And her vitally alive belly is filled with the very Life of God. It gives life to and is given to life by the, ever-present Christ; now revealed within her as the fully manifested Risen Christ.

How can I learn from her Sign? How can my soul freely empty these hands? How can my soul surrender self-protection? Can she actually trust God’s Love? Look closely, the answer is in the icon. Like Leonardo da Vinci’s famous depiction in the Sistine Chapel that shows God’s finger giving life to the outstretched fingertip of

Adam, a pair of Seraphim touch Our Lady’s upraised fingers, sustaining a continuous intimate connection to the inspiration and protection that come from Above.

The young, unmarried, Mary was offered an astonishing, seemingly impossible destiny. An angel told her that she would be overshadowed by the Most High and become pregnant with the long-awaited Messiah of Israel. Who ever heard of pregnancy without men? Unmarried pregnancies were death sentences. Yet her unflinching response was “Yes.” “Let it be done to me according to your word.” Her empty hands opened the doors of perception and Reality came flooding into her human body. The Mysterious Unknown revealed itself to her in person and the entire world was made new. Her paradigm-shattering, culture-transcending “Yes” is still echoing throughout all creation.

How can this be? We modern people may best understand this mysterious quantum reality in the contemporary discoveries and language of science. In his book, *Discovery of the Presence of God*, Devotional Nonduality, David Hawkins M.D., Ph.D.

tells us how he has scientifically validated the “discovery that every single action, feeling, or thought registers permanently beyond time and space in the all-encompassing contextual field of consciousness.”

But long before our science and its proofs, Christ, himself, spoke the same truth in simple and direct terms to the entire human race,

Let me tell you something: Every one of these careless words is going to come back to haunt you. There will be a time of Reckoning. Words are powerful; take them seriously. Words can be your salvation. Words can also be your damnation. (Matthew 12:37, *The Message*)

All I need to do is to consult my own experience to know without doubt that these statements about words are absolutely true. I need no further evidence than that which is close at hand in every moment. I do not need to wait for a reckoning in the future. This is the moment of Life. This is the moment of God. This and every moment are being imprinted by our words. Just notice how your world changes instantly when someone says something critical or thoughtlessly cruel. The same thing happens when we

speak unconsciously to others. They are impacted and imprinted by our words and so are we. We write our own Book of Life with our words, using our God-given free will and freedom of speech to write our personal books full of objections, criticisms, complaints, self-justifications, accusations and condemnation. It is a staggering and sobering realization to become aware that second-by-second we are writing our own autobiographies with the words we speak so casually. When we see this fact clearly, the Beatitudes and the entire Sermon on the Mount take on new life-giving meaning. Instead of good ideas for nice people to become nicer, they take on the form of a personal survival manual and provide step-by-step, day-by-day instruction on the Way of transformation.

The Epistle of James addresses the same issue,

If you could find someone whose speech was perfectly true, you'd have a perfect person, in perfect control of life. A bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course

in the face of the strongest winds. A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything—or destroy it! It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell. This is scary: You can tame a tiger, but you can't tame a tongue—it's never been done. The tongue runs wild, a wanton killer. With our tongues we bless God our Father; with the same tongues we curse the very men and women he made in his image. Curses and blessings out of the same mouth! My friends, this can't go on. A spring doesn't gush fresh water one day and brackish the next, does it? Apple trees don't bear strawberries, do they? Raspberry bushes don't bear apples, do they? You're not

going to dip into a polluted mud hole and get a cup of clear, cool water, are you?

(James 3:2-12, *The Message*)

The cup of clear, cool Water of Life came into our world through one word from Mary, "YES." The Christ returned to the Father through one word from Jesus, "YES." The Risen Christ within us empowers us to live in perfect, fearless, freedom as we learn to replace our objections, criticisms and doubts with our own resounding participation in the Great Affirmation of Life Itself. Our own great "YES" of infinite trust in God. *Let it be done to me according to your word. ... Thy will be done.*

Returning our quiet, pondering gaze to Our Lady of the Sign, we see both Mary's and Christ's "YES" made visible. They are inviting us to join in the ever-ongoing Incarnation of the Christ. Her hands are empty. Her body and soul are full of Christ and so are ours when we follow with our own freely chosen "Yes" to the extraordinarily ordinary circumstances of our daily lives.

"... as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us ... was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always been "Yes." (2 Cor 1:18-20, NIV)

But, even over 2700 years

before Dr. Hawkins wrote and nearly 800 before the writings of Paul and the Apostles and 700 years before Christ spoke it and lived it; the Prophet Isaiah served as a vessel for God to speak to all mankind for all time about the power of words,

*"I don't think the way you think. The way you work isn't the way I work." GOD's Decree. For as the sky soars high above earth, so the way I work surpasses the way you work, and the way I think is beyond the way you think. Just as rain and snow descend from the skies and don't go back until they've watered the earth, Doing their work of making things grow and blossom, producing seed for farmers and food for the hungry, So will the words that come out of my mouth not come back empty-handed. They'll do the work I sent them to do, they'll complete the assignment I gave them. (Isaiah 55:8-10, *The Message*)*

Our empty-handed Lady of the Sign is showing us that "YES LORD, Thy Will Be Done." is a very good assignment for our words to complete as we are writing the books of our own lives. It's a gift of Grace to be made aware of it. ☺

CCH BOOKSTORE

SUGGESTED TITLES FOR MARCH



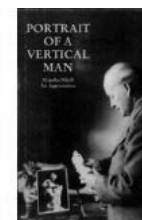
The Way to Silent Love
by A Carthusian



Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit
by Thomas Keating



Humility Matters
by Mary Margaret Funk



Portrait of a Vertical Man
An Appreciation of Maurice Nicoll
by Samuel Copley

BOOKSTORE AND LIBRARY HOURS

Open Monday-Friday 9 am-4 pm
Sunday 9:30-10 am & 11:30 am-noon

THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH

by Barbara Cook

I used to think that the Beatitudes were guidelines that only a mature Christian could live by. But after practicing Centering Prayer for some years, I know that they are the instructions that lead to maturity. They teach us how to become totally self-giving, like the Father, as demonstrated by Jesus. Once when Fr. Ronald Rolheiser was here, he stated it clearly: "If you want to feel like God, act like God." Be totally self-giving too.

When we act from the false self, our self-centered, selfish place, we tend to think we are God and we act in a controlling way, thinking we know best. Then we have to protect and defend our thoughts and actions, which requires us to act superior and brash. I know that from personal experience. That kind of action has a certain, recognizable, inner taste and it is certainly not meek.

As a Westerner I have often confused the idea of meek with weak. Weakness can be a character defect, but meekness is not. Nor was Jesus suggesting that we become

passive. Look at St. Paul and Jesus; their strength came from God and they acted from faith, so they did not have to reactively defend themselves in the difficult situations that confronted them.

Centering Prayer teaches us to be non-reactive. We practice "listening" and we learn to take the listening disposition into everyday life. We listen interiorly to God first, then to what is being said or done outside of us. That lets us stay open to the true wisdom of the heart and helps us avoid simple mechanical reactions. Sometimes it leads us to do nothing in response, but this nothing is not passivity; no response takes strength and discipline. Remaining meek and calm makes for clearer responses and conscious action.

Formerly, when I read "The meek shall inherit the earth," I associated earth with this planet we live on. Now my understanding is that it refers to this organic body I am living in, the body temple. I now know that when I am living from the false self and its ideas I am not

in unity with my deeper self, God, others, or my body.

It is by learning to become passive to our false self and its self-centered reactions and programs for happiness that our God self is exercised and grows into maturity. If we want to feel like God, we must learn to think and act like God: generous, unconditionally loving, all forgiving, patient.

By sitting in Centering Prayer twice a day and simply opening to God's Presence we are letting go of and becoming passive to our false selves. By not continually reinforcing our false selves, they become more able to actually be meek. We can then inherit the earth and be of one body, soul and spirit – a unity with our true selves, God and His creation.

During this time of Lent, we are patiently awaiting the celebration of Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday. By learning to have no fear in letting go of our old selves, in dying to our false selves, we will rise with Christ to His and our glory. Alleluia. ☪



ANNUAL AIM: BLESSED

Come, O you blessed of my Father! Matthew 25:34

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

A LONG PATH TO FREEDOM by Phil Darghty

For in His meekness ...
He achieved the mightiest
of all deeds ever fulfilled on earth.

... In this meekness,
the grace of God appeared
in His person,
and the obedient man,
at peace with God and in whom
God has pleasure, was revealed.

In this meekness,
Jesus Christ,
nailed to the cross as a criminal,
created order in the realm
of creation,
the order in which man
can live eternally
as the redeemed,
converted child of God.

Karl Barth,
preached on Good Friday 1948

In my search to see reality in myself,
I may come to the door
of perception.

But it will not open,
truth will not be revealed,
so long as I cling to what I know.
I need to have empty hands
to approach the unknown.

Jeanne de Salzmann, *The Reality of Being*

*Commit your way to the Lord ...wait ...
And you will inherit the land of abundant peace.*

Cf. Psalm 37

Sometimes it is hard to understand the many occurrences in life and how they are used to help others. When asked to write this article, my first thought was why me? I still have the same question, but decided to write anyway to share some about my life and its events and to reflect how my journey is related to this month's topic.

The simple definition of meek, according to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, is "having or showing a quiet and gentle nature; not wanting to fight or argue with other people." While the full definition is:

1. Enduring injury with patience and without resentment (mild)
2. Deficient in spirit and courage

(submissive)

3. Not violent or strong
(moderate)

In my youth, I was anything but meek. I was aggressive, out-of-control, and a danger to everyone around me. I loved to party. I had a goal to have sex every night. Working in restaurants made that lifestyle easy. When there wasn't enough money, it became easy to steal. This pattern led to a lifestyle where I became a wolf in sheep's clothing, an animal that took whatever it wanted. The inevitable finally occurred ... I got caught.

After the horrors were revealed, the courts imposed a penalty and the dust started to settle. I began a 59-year prison sentence. All told I would serve over three decades

in prison.

I started my time as most kids do, full of bravado and thinking I was “tough.” I didn’t know what tough was... But I learned. It didn’t seem to matter what I did, violence found me. I finally got sick and tired of being sick and tired.

It was in 1995 when a friend approached me and asked if I wanted to join a meditation group. I asked, “Where?” When he told me “in the chapel,” I said, “Are you out of your mind? That’s a deathtrap.” “No, no...” he explained, “I got the approval of all the shot callers [gang leaders].” I went to the first meeting. Everyone who was someone was there. We sat not only in the same room for four hours, but for 30 minutes with our eyes closed. Something happened to me that day, something changed.

I began a journey. After attending the meditation group regularly, I became a leader, a coordinator, and a facilitator gaining experience in numerous self-help groups. Over a period of time, my being changed and I learned how to be centered and open to do awesome things. Or perhaps better said, I learned how to let the Spirit flow through me and awesome things resulted. I certainly was not good at any of these roles in the beginning. For example, once I was to give a 15 minute speech on Centering Prayer while a band

took a break. I lasted five minutes; thankfully, somebody picked up the slack to complete the talk. I finally got the hang of it. Now you can’t shut me up!

When I found the Work of Inner Christianity, I found a new life. The Work principle, “I have a right not to be negative,” is a blessing that allowed me to improve life. Another key understanding is that one draws their own being.

In the course of this journey, I’ve met some powerful people, including Fr. Thomas Keating, Fr. Richard Rohr, Fr. Bill Sheehan, and don Miguel Riuz, among many others. Everyone I met has changed my life in some small way for the better, yet I cannot give enough justice to the impact these men had on my being. Fr. Thomas, for example, made it clear that no matter what your belief structure is, you can participate in Centering Prayer. Fr. Richard helped me understand mistakes happen for a reason and we improve our life through understanding them. He also shared about the transition to manhood, which explained so many issues I had experienced. Fr. Sheehan helped me understand God forgives no matter what. Miguel helped me believe that there is a new way to live. All of the guests (no matter who) combined their sharing that not only comforted me, but helped me

pass along these ideas and comfort on to others.

In the process I came into contact with The Church of Conscious Harmony through a sponsor. That also started a new journey toward more life changes with the additional practice of the Work of Inner Christianity and a new spiritual community.

The changes brought out a gentle, quieter, meeker person. I learned how asleep this one is. I learned about various parts of my false personality, my ‘I’s, and how I react, not act. I learned about many different ways I feed myself with energy. The Work is complex, yet simple. Most of all, I continue to learn that very little in life is essential. Service to others is a simple part of life. Is that meekness? Or are these ‘I’s playing with me yet again? Second force has become an understood term in the Work and how the relationship between first force and second force plays a role in life. Third force is a wonder that I am still learning about. One never learns it all.

I eventually served my three plus decades. The last 20 years were a whole lot better than the first 10. I learned many programs. I have a dedicated Centering Prayer practice. I learned the conscious movements of Tai Chi Chih. I have led and facilitated anger management, ethics, and victim

continued from page 7

awareness workshops. I became a lead coordinator for alternatives to violence project workshops. These are just a few of the many programs I was blessed to learn and share with others. I spent my final years in prison as a tutor helping men get their high school equivalency diplomas or associate college degrees. There wasn't enough time to do everything possible in those final years.

I'm not sure if this is an example of the definition of being meek as I understand it. I simply became willing to do what was needed because no one else would or was able to do it. I love doing what I do and giving back a small portion of what I took in my previous life.

Even after prison, the journey continues. I led an alternative to violence project workshop a few weekends ago. I am currently sharing an ethics class with guys at the sober living apartment that I just moved out of. Most of all I get to experience the Thursday night Work of Inner Christianity classes through my CD subscription. I am blessed.

I am now working, living in my own place, have my own car and most of all my freedom. My spiritual practice endures outside the confinement of prison walls. In truth, not a lot has changed. I simply don't have to wait for an officer to unlock the door. ☺

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.

20TH GUIDELINE



Prolonged, pervasive, or paralyzing
guilt feelings come from the false self.
True guilt in response to personal sin
or social injustice does not lead to discouragement
but to amendment of life.
It is a call to conversion.

SEEDS

One who is content with what he has,
and who accepts the fact
that he inevitably misses very much in life,
is far better off than one who has much more
but who worries about all he may be missing.
For we cannot make the best of what we are,
if our hearts are always divided between
what we are and what we are not....
We cannot be happy if we expect to live all the time
at the highest peak of intensity.
Happiness is not a matter of intensity
but of balance and order and rhythm and harmony....
Let us, therefore, learn to pass
from one imperfect activity to another
without worrying too much about what we are missing.

Thomas Merton, *Seeds*, pages 107-108.

DAILY CROSSES

Try not to be unduly disturbed by the tiny incidents of life. There is nothing permanent in them. Our soul is immeasurably greater than all these things. Part of its greatness is precisely its power to pass beyond all these ephemeral disturbances and to reach out and touch the eternal through what is merely passing. The causes—or occasions rather—of our troubles are only instruments; what we must try to do is to see the One Who is handling them—the God of Love.

It is the spirit of faith that sees this Love in suffering, and turns its darkness into light. This light of love—in reality the light of the Holy Spirit—is what imparts sweetness and goodness to everything. Our daily crosses are the disciplinary exercises by which the Holy Spirit develops in a soul the habit of using this light.

A Carthusian, *They Speak by Silences*, page 36.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CONTEMPLATIVE SERVICE

“We open ourselves to transforming grace through our consent in Centering Prayer, the Eucharist, the Word and spiritual community.”

CCH Statement of Beliefs

We are blessed to be part of a community
of intention and practice.

How do we as contemplatives meet the needs
of our spiritual community?

What would service look like coming from prayer
rather than from personality?

If you are a CCH member with at least two years of regular Centering Prayer practice and feel an interior call of the Spirit to explore and participate in contemplative service, please prayerfully consider joining the Contemplative Response Team.

The next training will be held Saturday, April 16 from 9 am-noon.

Please see consciousharmony.org/volunteer
for more detailed information on the
Contemplative Response Team and upcoming training.

“If one learns to listen to heart, it will tell one things so clearly—
what must be done, what must *not* be done, the real nature of people and
places and things.”

Rodney Collin, *The Theory of Conscious Harmony*



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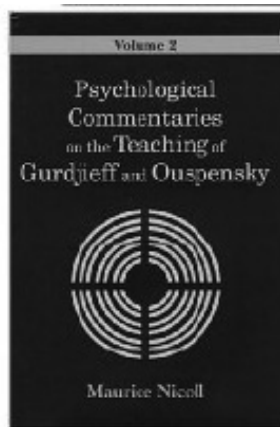
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THE WORK

OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

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

THOSE WHO ARE MEEK WILL GET BLISS

Let us take another phrase from the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the meek.” This means that those who are meek will get bliss, inner happiness, will get something that everyone is looking for because no one is happy internally, no one has this strange source of inner happiness called bliss. People often think blessedness is what is going to happen later on but from the Work point of view as well as from the Gospel point of view this is not the right way to take the profound idea that is indicated here. You can get a source of inner happiness if you apply the ideas of the Work to yourself. Now what does ‘meek’ mean in the original sense of the Greek word? It means ‘not resentful.’ “Blessed are those who are not resentful.” Now I think you can connect this with that phrase used in the Work which says that we must stop making internal accounts.

When you are resentful are you not making internal accounts? Are you not considering internally? You

will notice that the Sermon on the Mount begins with the practice of non-identifying with yourself and puts it into the phrase: those who are poor in spirit will get bliss. A man very full of himself, a man completely identified with himself, is a man who will not be able to reach this different level of Being where different influences begin to act on him that will fill up this extraordinary lack of inner happiness that everyone, if he is honest, knows he suffers from.

Now you will see that if a man can observe himself and cease so much to identify with himself and with his pictures of himself and with his vanity and so on, he will be able to practice being meek in the real sense of the Greek word—that is, thinks they ought to behave—that is, he will not make so many internal accounts against others, and, in fact, he may eventually reach the state that is mentioned in the Lord’s Prayer of being able to cancel the debts of others against him completely,

for this is the real meaning of the Greek word translated as *forgive* in the phrase “forgive us our debts as we forgive others.” No, the meaning is far more powerful than that, far more practical. The meaning is *cancel completely*. From this we can see how close the teaching of the Work about no making internal accounts comes to what is said also in the Gospels. I remind you that this Work was always said to be esoteric Christianity—namely, the inner meaning and fragrance of the Gospels that has survived.

The Gospels speak a great deal about the Kingdom of Heaven and what it is necessary to do to enter it. The Gospels say that you have to become a quite different person to have any chance of entering the Kingdom of Heaven. They also say that unless a man becomes as a little child he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Yes, but what does it mean practically? The Work talks not about the Kingdom of Heaven but about the Conscious Circle of Humanity, and by that

HOLY WEEK

Taize Service
Mar 24 7:30-8:30 pm

Good Friday Service
Mar 25 noon-1 pm
(Office & Bookstore are closed after service)

Easter Prayer Vigil
Mar 25 1 pm-Mar 27 7 am
(in Theosis Chapel)

Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Mar 26 8:30 am-12:30 pm
\$10 No need to pre-register

Easter Sunday
Sunrise Emmaus Walk 6:30 am
Lectio Divina 7:30 am
Easter Potluck Brunch 8:30 am
Worship Service 10 am
YES Program 10 am

it means people at a much higher level of Being than we are at as we are now. Christ lays down certain rules, certain indications, certain teachings, about how to get to the Kingdom of Heaven. These are given in the Sermon on the Mount, and we are given a perfectly clear indication as to how we may reach the Conscious Circle of Humanity, by work on our Being, by work on our level of Being as we are now. I fancy that the Sermon on the Mount cannot be understood as it

is translated save what we have been given by this Work on its practical side we can understand more or less what the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount, which have been so badly translated by ignorant people really mean. As I said, we can understand what it means to be poor in spirit in the right way. ☺

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, pages 727-728. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the *Work of Inner Christianity* class held Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at The Church of Conscious Harmony.

MARCH CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

Contemplative Outreach United Day of Prayer
Mar 19 9 am-3 pm
Seminary of the Southwest
\$25 preregister at www.heartoftexas-co.org

Community Workday
Mar 5 9 am-noon

Forgiveness Prayer Workshop
Mar 21 7-8:30 pm
+ 6 consecutive Tuesdays
\$60 register with office

Half -Day Centering Prayer
Mar 26 8:30 am-12:30 pm
\$10 no need to preregister

Holy Week
see details at left

MONTHLY

1st Sundays
Bring non-perishables for Caritas

Gurdjieff Music
Mar 15 7:30-8:30 pm

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 10:15-10:45 am
Contemplative Lunch noon-1 pm
Contemplative Communion Service 6-7 pm

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

Fridays 7:30-8:45 pm
Devotional Service

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



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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*

