



THE MARK

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



Illis felix in tota culmine rose
Puerum. celo quam dedit iose deus
A iudicis. et anam par defuit dicitur

Et dulci vltimo dicit rosa vlt
Mox vultus vltis vltis affamie dicit
Dum vltis vltis vltis vltis vltis

DO I UNDERSTAND?

by Tim Cook

When I was a kid growing up in Wisconsin we lived in a neighborhood that was near the edge of the city, with woods and fields that kids could play in freely without adult supervision. There were about eight of us in my age group who played together nearly every day, and for the most part, we got along pretty well. Every now and then, however, there were the inevitable little quarrels over the rules of games or the way one of us played. Then came the inevitable name-calling and childish attempts to insult each other. But each of us had a powerful shield that could be called up at will to rebuff even the most powerful of petty accusations. And I'm pretty sure that these very same shields were used by many of us in our own childhood quarrels.

"I'm rubber, you're glue. Everything you say bounces off me and sticks to you." Another familiar old standby could probably be traced back to the dawn of language itself, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me." When these words were spoken loudly and confidently, they offered the one who wielded them a sort of

impervious protection, a shield that covered over any emotional pain or hurt of rejection and attack.

As adults, we may find ourselves wishing that we had some sort of consciousness protection device similar in function to those chanting rebuffs of our childhood experience. We may even notice subtle, almost inaudible, interior voices echoing those childhood chants; although we may now consider ourselves fully conscious and much too sophisticated and mature to let that sort of thing come out of our mouths. So what do we have now, however, that could replace our younger experience of protection against attack and insult? We can learn to understand.

Our attitudes, our fixed ways of taking things, cause us to argue with each other. The Work of Inner Christianity tells us,

"To argue is not to understand: to understand is not to argue. No one was ever changed by arguing. But we must make our attitudes conscious and not argue. To make an attitude conscious is to deprive it of its power over you. Whatever comes into the light of

consciousness is deprived of its power ... Are you going to say that you have no great prejudices, no typical opinions, no bias, no hard places, no rigidities in your mind? Surely you cannot say such a thing seriously. But if a magician told you all the fixed attitudes and the resulting prejudices and opinions etc. that characterize you, would you for a moment accept what he said? You would feel insulted."

The Work of Inner Christianity provides us with real tools to participate in our world of give-and-take without taking insult personally and without reacting with emotional negativity. The concept, the principle, taught by the Work is understanding. The Work teaches: "If you understood you wouldn't disagree." Let's see if we can understand how the principle of understanding can help us personally as we participate in an increasingly fragmented and difficult world.

As our skill at self-observation increases we begin to see hidden attitudes that we have been completely unaware of. A good

way to discover our covered-over, unconscious content is to see how we notice that content *seemingly* in another person. Any faults seem to be in him not in me. Carl Jung stated simply, “We project onto others what we cannot accept in ourselves.” *The Psychological Commentaries* by Maurice Nicoll alert us to the difficulty of realizing this common phenomenon. We may know people who project suspicion, slander, accusation, offendedness, dislike, hate, and all the rest or we may be those people ourselves. But we may remain completely unaware of attitudes like this in ourselves without real efforts at self-observation. We project on to others what we should see in ourselves as long as we remain under the illusion that we are fully conscious. “A conscious man knows himself. A mechanical man imagines he does. Now in regard to projecting onto others what we do not see in ourselves, remember that this Work says, “We are mirrors to one another.”

That mirroring phenomenon is clearly described by Aletheia Luna,

“What happens when you have a whole bunch of uncomfortable, embarrassing and annoying emotions that you don’t want to unconsciously deal with? ... these emotions are projected on to other people, so that *other* people become carriers

of our own perceived flaws. Fortunately (or unfortunately) for us, this form of emotional displacement makes it much easier to live with ourselves ... because everyone *else* is responsible for our misery – not us! As a result of externalizing our emotions and perceiving them in others, we continue suffering terribly, often creating false self-images that portray us as “the victim” or “the good/righteous person” when the reality is that we aren’t.”

However those false-self images are not good in and of themselves; they cover over the always present True-Self and its basic core of goodness that was given to all humanity by God. Centered in Christ, within, we are able to understand and actually learn that we are capable through our God-given nature, to live from a deeper zone of consciousness that does not have to take offense or to reactively offend another.

Self-observation and self-study through the lens of the ancient traditions of Inner Christianity is actually having the use of a personal laboratory for studying the workings of the whole of mankind like a sociologist or anthropologist or Christologist. Each one of us is what Ken Wilber refers to as a holon, a representative of the whole. Though each one of us is unique, we discover that each is shockingly, far-more like all the others than

our unconscious false-self could ever imagine. As each of us begins to see and take responsibility for our own automatic projections onto the world and people around us, we also begin to progressively be aware that everyone around us is probably doing the same thing toward us. They don’t see or hear us any more clearly than we now see or hear them. Projection tends to be pervasive in our lives until we understand and come to our own willing participation in Christ, the absolutely deepest and utterly truest revelations of human evolution in consciousness.

It’s not personal. Almost none of what passes between us and the world is personal. When we see the process directly in ourselves, for ourselves, we get it. Most of the “stuff” between human beings is simply unconscious, mechanical projection coming from us toward others and from others toward us. It is largely reactive, loveless and meaningless until we join Jesus in the prayer of infinite liberation in Christ: “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

None of us truly know what we are doing until we see the world around us and ourselves through Christ’s eyes, the eyes of our own deepest center. Christ’s eyes see a forgiven, resurrecting and consciously embodied and evolving mankind living in a sacred world. Christ sees only innocence.

Father forgive us for we don’t know what we are doing. Now we understand. ☉

FORBEARANCE

by Barbara Cook

In Centering Prayer we are opening to God, the Divine Presence, whom we know is within us and in whom we live and move and have our being. This Presence is love itself who can bring only the highest good, love and mercy for us, his human creations. When we consent to God's love, we open up and allow His loving, healing and restoring presence into our being. The Divine Presence is our divine physician and therapist, who also heals our emotional wounds if we consent. This healing is not instant. It is a process that takes time. The healing process is the Spiritual Journey.

In the beginning of this journey there is a "springtime." It is like any falling in love, except that now, it is with God. In that season there is usually a lot of goodwill and ease of association. But, as with any relationship, things cool off a little after a while. After we've been in it for a while the consolations diminish. Then we just seem to be bombarded with thoughts; or as the Contemplative tradition says, "dryness" occurs. That's when we must cultivate the practice of generosity of spirit or forbearance. Fr. Thomas Keating

says that a jolly attitude in putting up with all sorts of the vicissitudes in life and in prayer will take us far on the journey. When we are set upon with restlessness or boredom, we can learn to meet it with forbearance. It will pass and we will be lighter for it.

There is a simple walking around prayer method to aid us on the journey. It is known as the Welcoming Prayer and it cultivates the disposition of forbearance. It helps to bring us back to ourselves and to our relationship with God, no matter what the circumstances seem to be. If we pray for forbearance and use the Welcoming Prayer daily whenever we meet a difficult experience, we'll find that an embracing attitude will help us move through the situation with ease and grace.

The current Welcoming Prayer method goes like this:

FEEL AND SINK INTO WHAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING THIS MOMENT IN YOUR BODY.

"WELCOME" WHAT YOU ARE EXPERIENCING THIS MOMENT IN YOUR BODY AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSENT TO THE DIVINE INDWELLING.

LET GO BY SAYING: "I LET GO

OF MY DESIRE FOR SECURITY, AFFECTION, CONTROL AND EMBRACE THIS MOMENT AS IT IS."

It is a wondrous means to meet life on this journey and it helps us cooperate with the dismantling of our false self system, the configuration of the ego we formed in childhood. Now we see that false self, which seemed to protect us, just keeps us from the love of God and others. By using the Welcoming Prayer method as a way to more easily meet whatever comes our way, we become spiritually strong and develop a deeper trust relationship with God. It helps me to let go and let God. It will help you too. Try it and see. 

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

ANNUAL AIM: BLESSED

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

BEYOND FAMILY PERSECUTION

by Beth Pierce

In this extraordinary worldview, persecution endured for God is the peak of happiness. Those who have experienced this beatitude have moved beyond self-interest to such a degree that they no longer have a possessive attitude toward themselves. Their identity is rooted in Christ and the unique identity He wants them to have.

Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love*

We have been given the opportunity to become fully alive and present to both of our natures. From here we can begin to search for and intentionally accept the role foreordained for us on earth as an intentional conduit of divine creative energy manifesting on earth and a returning energy flowing back into the universe.

Our journey can begin.

Robert H. Pish, *The Path of the Beatitudes, A New Beginning*

You will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence.

Psalm 16:11

I have learned to always say “yes” at The Church of Conscious Harmony. I have been grateful for my participation in the Youth Council and other CCH committees. I wish for the spirit of clarity and understanding to dwell in me as I write about this month’s beatitude:

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Matthew 5:11-12

“In this extraordinary world view, persecution endured for God is the peak of happiness,” states Thomas Keating in *Invitation to Love*. So what kind of delusions of self-importance would I have

if I seriously think my experiences of perceived persecution are endured for God? When I read this passage, I imagine Jesus is talking to his disciples, knowing that his friends will be thrown to the lions or crucified by the authorities for His sake. They have shouted His name in the marketplace and been taken away, but they are in a state of exaltation.

That is not my experience with persecution or even perceived persecution. According to Merriam-Webster, to persecute means to “harass or punish in a manner designed to injure, grieve, or afflict, specifically to cause to suffer because of belief.” I have felt harassed, punished, injured,

grieved, afflicted, but not because of belief. I had no idea why I was being punished or persecuted. This persecution was in the form of family persecution. I was left out of family events, and I didn't know why. I would drive past my mother's house on the way home from church and see everyone's car, and if I stopped to visit everyone would go home. I think this lasted a few months. At first I thought I was imagining it. I cannot remember details, but at some point it became clear that I was being deliberately excluded. I can remember my mother telling me, "Well, I told your sisters that every family falls apart after a while," which made me feel like she had listened to their complaints against me and consented to them.

My sisters and I had always been close. Our father had died in the Korean War, so it was just the four girls and Mother. As my sisters and I grew up, we had screaming battles that lurched up-and-down the hall and careened out the front door. We eventually united, because our mother was a force to be reckoned with: it took all of us to balance the scale. When I was a grad student, this is what I wrote about her: "My mother is of pioneer stock – determined, resolute, industrious, with no sympathy for weakness of will or frailty of spirit, at least where her children

are concerned. There is nothing very subtle about my mother. She's complicated and enigmatic perhaps, but definitely not subtle." Even when she remarried when I was ten, the differences between our family and my step-family just reinforced our bonds of sisterhood.

My two older sisters and I ended up in Austin in the 1960s, and we hung out together, went to honky-tonks, negotiated pregnancies and motherhood and marriages together. We talked about and tried to make sense of our childhood. Mostly we talked about our mother; and usually, we would dissolve into a frenzy of laughter as we recalled one or another crazy event from our childhood. To our friends, we were "the Pierce girls." Our identities all mixed up together in a single unit. We gathered together on holidays and birthdays. We would meet at Mother's house several times a month to play wildly enthusiastic card games with rules that would never be found in Hoyle's Official Card Games. The rules were whatever we agreed to, and they changed with alarming frequency.

So when I began to have a sense that I was being purposely excluded, it was not only abnormal, it was terrifying. It was like being turned away from my tribe. I had no idea what was going on and I didn't know how I would manage without my

sisters. I would go about my daily activities, become engaged in work or some other activity, and then when I was driving along in the car, an event would pop into my mind and go on its endless loop, and I would keep driving, tears streaming down my face. I remember trying to sit in Centering Prayer and ending up curled up in a fetal position and sobbing and wishing I could talk to my friend Marilyn, who had recently died of cancer.

It was my close friend and mentor Marilyn who had led me to CCH about a year before. She was dying of cancer and I wanted to spend time with her. She suggested that I go with her to this new church she had found. She died about five or six months later, but I had found a home. The year after Marilyn's death, the annual CCH aim was "The Year of Practice." I had been doing Centering Prayer every morning for the past year or so. I was trying to look at the events of my life through the lens of the teachings.

In my tears, I would ask for God's guidance and grace. I would ask for understanding. I would ask for the ability to forgive and go forward. It was the Holy Spirit that led me from there, and perhaps Marilyn whispering in my ear. After one episode of sobbing, I felt a bolt of clarity and just came to

terms with the estrangement. It just was. I didn't know why, but it was. I decided that the relationship with my family as it had been would not be necessary for my well-being. I could be sad about that, but it was time to move past it. I was sad, but I was also very rational, which was Marilyn's stock in trade. I made decisions about my future.

I decided that I would tie up any loose ends, and I went to each of my sisters to apologize. I first went to my oldest sister and said, "I think I have offended you in some way, but I don't know how. I just want to say that I love you, I never intended to offend you, and I apologize." I then went to my second-oldest sister and I called my younger sister and said the same thing. I did find out how I had offended them, and we all had a good cry. I was still mystified and hurt; but life moved on, relationships were smoothed over. This had changed me, however. I had made an internal separation from my sisters. I wasn't attached in the same way as before. Initially, there was an element of distrust in my separation; but with time and events, the distrust vanished and I simply enjoyed their company and loved them as best I could.

At the time, I had never identified this as persecution. I certainly did not feel that this was persecution "endured for

God." I was just trying to get through a difficult period of my life. But I believe the fact that I had invited God's guidance and grace changed my intention. I was no longer seeking comfort. I was not operating out of a need to re-establish my safety and security or to reassure myself of my family's affection and esteem. My prayer for grace and guidance was a prayer for the highest outcome for all. As St. Paul says in Romans 8:28,

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

Also, as one of our own mystics, Mary Ann Best, stated in a recent *Daily Word* email: "the diminishment begin – sometimes slowly, sometimes suddenly, dramatically. Their possibilities manifest in a thousand ways – large and small.... Can they all be experienced right up to the point.... where everything is timeless, unfolding in a divine order that is at once ever-so-real and deeply mysterious and unknown.... What changes everything is not the happenings but our own attitudes amidst all."

The lessons from this period of my life provided a foundation for later events. In the meantime I

had been attending CCH retreats and The Work of Inner Christianity classes, which were useful with the ongoing family drama and work drama. I went to retreats with my head filled with internal dialogue, and in the silence I could hear it, really hear it. I was dismayed listening to my internal considering. I was crying and unloading, unloading and crying; finding some peace and then going back to unload and cry some more.

About ten years ago we had another crack in the sisterhood. My younger sister, who had lived in the Northeast, was experiencing some distress in her life and she moved to Austin, which set off another round of sisterhood drama. When she moved in with our mother, the sisterhood dynamic went kablooie. Emails were flying. The screaming battles from our childhood recurred. It was a crazy time. And to complicate matters, our mother was in and out of the hospital, so the fear that she might die no doubt sparked the rage and anger. It was like an angry and hateful energy took hold of us.

This lasted for a couple of years or so, and I don't know how it ended, except that we all quit playing. In the midst of all of it, I continued my daily Centering Prayer practice and Centering Prayer retreats, which helped me keep centered,

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to refrain from “the useless acting out from fear.” The Work also held me. I began to really see that if I truly understood my sisters, I would not disagree with them. I could see that life was happening in the only way it could. I was engaged in “divine therapy” while two of my sisters also participated in their own therapy. My sisters sent me flowers, thanking me for “setting an example for how we can really be a family.” Perhaps I was a channel for change, but what really happened is that our deep abiding love for one another was bigger than any of us, and we all had a wholehearted

wish to dwell in that love. Yes, we occasionally have emotional disruptions, but now we are able to resolve them peacefully, with respect and compassion. We have healed.

“The peace that Jesus offers is not sentimental. This peace transcends joy and sorrow, hope and despair. This peace is rooted in a way of being that transcends the emotions. We are no longer blown away by the winds of persecution, nor washed away by the flood of tribulation. Our house is built on rock, and the rock is Christ.”

Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love* 

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.

26TH GUIDELINE



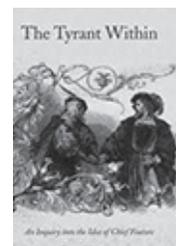
Contemplative prayer, in the traditional sense of the term, is the dynamic that initiates, accompanies and brings the process of transformation to completion.

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SUGGESTED TITLES FOR SEPTEMBER



LETTING GO
BY DAVID HAWKINS



THE TYRANT WITHIN
BY BOB HUNTER



BEING PEACE
BY THICH NHAT HANH



DARK NIGHTS OF THE SOUL
BY THOMAS MOORE

BOOKSTORE AND LIBRARY HOURS
Open Monday-Friday 9 am-4 pm
Sunday 9:30-10 am & 11:30 am-noon

A CONTEMPLATIVE SENSE OF THE WHOLE

Over the years, as I have come to know and participate in the life of different monastic communities, and given myself over to careful study of the classic texts of this tradition, I have realized more fully than I did at the time what it is to give oneself over to the contemplative life as a *project*, and how this project remains ever unfinished, always unfolding. Still, it is a vision of life that I continue to find immensely compelling, and I have devoted much of my life to the task of interpreting the contemplative traditions of Christianity in terms that can be retrieved and adapted for contemporary use. It has been a source of unending astonishment to me to discover how many and various are the possible adaptations of these contemplative traditions. Far from being of interest only to monks, the contemplative vision of life, I have discovered, speaks in a meaningful way to a wide range of persons seeking to live their lives with a greater sense of authenticity and purpose. To

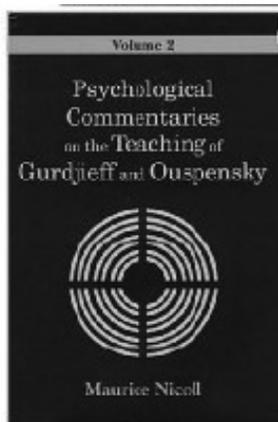
live contemplatively, in this sense, can be understood simply as a certain intense way of being alive, grounded in a conscious awareness of the depth and beauty of one's own soul and one's relationship to God and the whole of existence.

Still the Christian contemplative tradition, in particular the primitive tradition of ancient Egyptian monasticism, is insistent that the acquisition of such awareness is a long, difficult process, requiring a disciplined attention to the sources of our own fragmentation and alienation and a commitment to a kind of therapeutic process whereby the soul can be remade in God, restored to its original image and likeness. Part of what makes the contemplative approach to spiritual renewal so significant is its honesty about the depth of our alienation and the effects of this alienation on our lives and on the world. Renewal is possible, the contemplative tradition maintains, but for it to be sustained and meaningful it must touch into

the very roots of our being....

Rooted in a strong commitment to place and to a spiritual practice oriented toward a gradual transformation of the human person and the world itself, this spiritual tradition has enjoyed enduring influence not only in terms of its central ideas, but also as a way of life. The affinities between this tradition and the different visions of ecology coming to expression in the present moment are striking, and the benefits of thinking of them in relationship to one another are, I believe, noteworthy. Among the most significant of these affinities is the shared sense that the ecological crisis (which is also a cultural, social, and political crisis) we are facing in this moment is at its deepest level spiritual in character, and that our response to this crisis will require of us nothing less than a spiritual transformation. 

Douglas E. Christie, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind, Notes for a Contemplative Ecology*, pages 13-17.



THE WORK

OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

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

HERE, LIE ALL THE POSSIBILITIES
OF GROWTH

We have previously spoken of the original conception of the *just* man. It was not a sentimental idea. The just man is between the opposites, in a state of equilibrium. By knowing how to withdraw force from the opposites, his centre of gravity is not pulled to one side or the other. This is only possible by reaching a definite feeling of one's own *nothingness*, as was said. To feel one is something prevents one from reaching a position between the opposites. When the Work says that a man must come to realize his own *nothingness* before he can be re-born, it does not mean that he must humble himself and so on, but that he must by long self-observation actually begin to realize that he is nothing and that there is no such person as himself. The object of this is to get into a position, psychologically speaking, between the opposites. I mean that it has a definite object. Why is it so important to get somewhere into the centre of the pendulum and not swing to and fro? Because here,

between the opposites, lie all the possibilities of growth. Here influences from higher levels reach us. Here, in this place where one can feel one's own nothingness and where one is therefore free from contradictions, influences and meanings coming from higher centres, *which have no contradictions*, can be felt. Not regarding yourself as good or bad, not priding yourself on being just or otherwise, not thinking you are well-treated or badly-treated, not being caught by either movement through identifying, you come into this mid-position. This is not easy! With personality active, it is impossible. Sometimes, when the opposites are drained of force, as in severe illness, a person is brought into it. Then all his centres are in focus and he understands and sees clearly. 

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, page 329. 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.



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TRUE PEACE

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. (John 14:27)

Every one of us is searching for peace, but we do not always search for it where it can be found. The peace that the world hopes for is as different and as removed from the peace that comes from God, as God himself is different and removed from the world. To put it another way, the world promises peace, but it never gives it. The world does offer a few passing pleasures—but those pleasures cost far more than they are worth.

Jesus alone can give peace to mankind. He brings us into harmony with himself. He brings our passions into submission. He sets limits to our desires. He comforts us through the hope of riches that will never perish. He gives us the joy of the Holy Spirit and causes us to taste that inner joy even when we are suffering. The spring that produces peace cannot run dry, and the depths of the soul in which it resides cannot be reached by all of humanity's evil. Therefore for the righteous person it becomes a treasure that no one

can take away.

True peace can be found only in possessing God. And possessing God here in this life can be found only in submission to faith and obedience to God's law. Both of these things reflect a pure and unalloyed love in the depths of the heart.

Therefore, thrust away all forbidden things. Cut out all unlawful desires. Dismiss all your bustling about and your worrying. Desire only God, seek only God, and you will enjoy peace—in spite of the world. What is troubling you? Poverty? Ridicule? Failure? Inward and outward crosses? Look on all these things as genuine favors from the hand of God, distributed to his friends, favors that he allows you to share. Then the world will change complexion, and nothing will take away your peace. Ⓐ

The Complete Fénelon, page 180. François Fénelon was a seventeenth-century French archbishop, controversial theologian and spiritual thinker. His writings have been translated into English and edited by Robert J. Edmonson & Hal M. Helms.

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Visit consciouharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

6-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Sep 9-14
Please register in the office.

Enrichment Movie - "Human"
Sunday, Sep 11 1 pm

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Sep 17 8:30 am-4:30 pm \$15
brown bag lunch

MONTHLY

1st Sundays
Bring non-perishables for Caritas

Community Workday
Sep 10 9 am-noon

Gurdjieff Music
Sep 20 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
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COSMIC REALITY

*I came from the Father
and have come into the world.
Now I am leaving the world,
and going back to the Father.*

John 16:28

∞

Since all reality
is the manifestation
of the Godhead
and Christ
has passed into
identification with It,
Christ is present
everywhere
and in everything.
The cosmos is now
the Body of
the glorified Christ
who dwells
in every part of it.

Thomas Keating,
The Mystery of Christ

