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THE MARK

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COMMUNION

2017

THE WAY OF THE URBAN MONK

by Tim Cook

When I awoke from the state of hypnotic sleep that had identified my entire life experience, I was instantly relieved of the chronic feeling of depression that had seemed to be a part of who I was. I was amazed to feel and recognize the liberating touch of God's Spirit as my mind and heart were released from the feelings of tension, pressure, shame and despair that had, until then, accompanied me through my childhood and young adult years.

That state of graceful freedom persisted for about three weeks and then was gradually replaced by my old familiar grey-sky, overcast moods. But now, having experienced God's touch, I knew without doubt that God loved me and that the rest of my life would be spent in finding the experience of that spiritual touch again. From time to time it would return, and each time there would be an accompanying feeling of relief and release and a sense of "now at last I've got it and this time it will last forever." But it would

always disappear again, usually fading away so gradually and unnoticeably that the return of the darkened consciousness was rarely revealed to me until the Light began to return again, sometimes many weeks and once many years later. I would wonder how it could disappear, why I couldn't stay awake and what could I do to prevent that nightmare of seeming separation from God from happening again?

I read a lot spiritual books, did some yoga, dabbled in meditation, joined T-Groups from Esalen and talked to a few friends who seemed to have similar interests; but, no matter what I did I could not stay conscious of God. But one of those books held a key. *The Only Dance There Is* by Ram Dass helped me see the connection of the regularity of breathing, eating and drinking that keeps my physical body alive is also necessary for the body of my spiritual consciousness to live and thrive. It too requires the regular availability of the food and water of Spirit. Ram Dass hit me with a totally unexpected

idea – householders, like me, can live like monks. Monks go to monasteries so they can focus on the One thing. Their practices are as regular as sunrise and sunset and breathing and eating. They still go to work each day, but all their activities are arranged to give them regular, continuous access to the experience of God's presence. Householders go to work each day too, but we do a lot of other things that do not lead our attention to the experience of God, which I so hungered for.

I knew I had to learn how to devote a lot more attention to what really matters and it had to be some kind of formalized structure around my daily life. When I gave myself a choice of whether or not to do the meditation, Bible study or spiritual reading, I would often let it slide. How was I ever to stay awake to God? If I really wanted what my heart so desperately longed for, I had to make some choices about what's truly important to my everyday experiences. I needed to establish some non-negotiable

conditions for my life.

So I began to conceive of myself as an urban monk – a householder, spiritual practitioner who works in the world and lives according to a rule of life that brings order and stability to an out-of-balance life, which, in my case, had previously moved largely by whatever whims or urges happened to be moving through me at any given moment. I made a life choice for a direction and focus that my social and family world did not share. It wasn't an easy choice and it took a while with a few false starts and stops to get truly regular with it; but after a while, it became a real joy. As I said, it was a bit hard to get into a rhythm at first, but the rewards more than compensated for any challenges.

I had chosen the life of an urban monk, living out that role in my condo at 1300 South Dillon Way in Aurora, Colorado, disguised as a medical equipment salesman. It was an unusual way to live, in a one monk monastery, but it worked for me. I got up at

5 AM aided by strong coffee. Then, every day, it was 30 minutes of hatha yoga, followed by 30 or more minutes of study and finally 20 minutes of silent meditation. All together it took about two hours. Breakfast and a shower followed and I was out the door for work by 8 o'clock. In the evening, after work, there was time for study and another 20 minutes of meditation. It really worked for me and I felt great in my one-man monastery. I had never realized just how much I needed regularity and healthy rhythms in my life. I was certainly aware that all of the natural world lives in regularity, but I hadn't realized that humans are no exception. My aim was never based on getting away from the world, I just wanted to bring some grounded stability and directed intention into my life. True monks are not getting away from or avoiding anything, they simply understand that our lives and experiences follow our attention. Giving our attention to whatever we wish to is our right as free-will

co-creators, but I had personally played out so many options and had become utterly convinced that I needed God's help to live a balanced, healthy life.

After several years of living like an urban monk, I felt ready to meet a partner. I prayed for someone who would like a person who lived as I did. God sent Barbara. She did like me and even asked to join me in my daily practice. It really worked for her too, so our house became a two monk monastery. We lived our everyday life aimed toward God by our self-chosen rule of life and we have ever since.

When we founded CCH, we wondered if there were others who would also like to benefit from living the life of householder monks. We contacted some old friends in Austin, sent out an invitation to engage together in a 5 year experiment in a Christian community, and 24 people decided to give it a try. We would all rise at 5 AM and do the same practices of study, yoga and Centering Prayer in our widely separated homes.

Our monastery without walls was now located all over the city in a shared community in Christ Consciousness. The church we share today was founded on a monastic ideal of daily practice in community. We've grown in depth as well as in numbers as Christ has formed our community increasingly in his own image.

Does it matter to anyone but me if I live the life a monk? You bet it does. The family of man is one family and the growth in Spirit of any one of us blesses the entire family. Monks have always been praying and working for the world and for the glory of God. Monasteries are also centers of learning, where the spiritual and cultural riches of the entire human race have been held in trust. In 1995 Thomas Cahill wrote a best-selling book, *How The Irish Saved Civilization*, which details the role Irish monasteries played in saving manuscripts and texts from the depredations of the Huns, Goths, Visigoths, Franks, Anglos and Saxons in the power vacuum that followed the fall of Rome. Ancient texts and manuscripts of all sorts were gathered by clergy all over Europe and brought to the stone monasteries on the cold North Atlantic coast for preservation and copying. The treasures of Western culture that were being burned and destroyed everywhere else were saved for all of us by those

nameless, faceless, unremembered monks. Does it matter if there are monks? You bet it does.

Not everyone in our church family lives by a rule or engages in daily practice yet a lot of us do and all are welcome to join us in living our lives as urban monks. Our church offers support, teaching, direction, guidance and experience. Each day as we follow our rule in our home monasteries, we also join in a community of God consciousness that has come down to us through the ages uniting us to monks of all times, all religions and all races in a communion of silence and Presence that unites all being.

Our world has always gone through times of darkness and madness and there have always been and always will be those who live to keep the Light alive.

All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within.

Romans 8:22 (*The Message*)

Our church, our monastery without walls exists for the sole purpose of participating in, assisting and supporting the transformation of the human race – one monk at a time. ☸

DO WE HAVE THE WILL?

We are not created to be prisoners in a mall.

We long for life, for air to breath, for sunrises and sunsets,
for someone to love and to know we are loved.

We are not born to perish in material stuff.

We are born to be bright stars in this cosmic life—
radiating love, beauty, goodness, unity and truth—
the glory of God is to shine out in our lives.

We have the capacity for more life but do we have the will?

This is the question we must honestly face
but it is difficult to do so alone.

We must face the question of the future together. ...

It is time to wake up—
for something new is about to happen in our midst. ☸

Ilia Delio, *Waiting in an Unfinished Universe*, December 2016 article on
www.omegacenter.info

TIME TO BEGIN AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME

by Barbara Cook

Every new moment is an auspicious time to begin again. Each time we celebrate a birthday, the beginning of a new month, a new season, a new year – it gives us time to look back and see where we've come from and where we wish to go. I recall a friend who attended a one day retreat on her 60th birthday saying that she had spent those 60 years cultivating life aims and now she wanted to cultivate her spiritual life more fully. I don't know where she is on her journey but I do know that when we speak our intention with a gesture, it can have force.

Each New Year's Eve we celebrate our intention toward a more conscious year by having a Taize (reconciliation) service; a burning bowl ritual where we write down something we want to let go of, prayerfully burn it, and write out a wish or aim for the coming year to take home for safe keeping; then we pray in the New Year in the sanctuary from 11:45 PM to 12:15 AM. The celebration feels like a clear intention, a cleansing and a **wish** confirmed with a gesture.

This year feels as though we're standing with unfamiliar grounds before us; the only thing that is tried and true is the rock on which

we stand – Christ in us, our hope of Glory – that never changes. We know that more solidly by being in relationship to that rock of faith. Anyone who has a Centering Prayer practice is aware of this. As we go forth this year into uncharted territory in our worldly affairs, it's a perfect time to develop and strengthen our relationship with that which is changeless, with Love that grows and heals and makes us whole. We become whole so that we can be whole makers. Anyone who is open to their relationship with God knows that God loves us and all creation particularly. And that Love has no other. Can we be so surrendered to that unconditional love that we can embrace the apparent others? Can we be a force for God on this earth to do what Christ did through Jesus and even greater things? As Sr. Ilia has revealed so eloquently in her teachings: as Christ bearers, we are the leading edge of Christogenesis, the tip of evolving love and wholeness. Can we be not just people living comfortable little lives as people that are being loved into wholeness, but Christ evolvers in this world now?

The force for change will come through contemplatives who lives

are being changed in undeniable ways. Stop and look at your life now and where it was. This is not just for us, but for the transformation of all mankind if we say yes. Let us say yes to doing our prayer, lengthening our prayer times, attending retreats, and developing the gifts we are being given. Let us say yes to being willing to love the sinners (those who apparently miss the mark of love and wholeness) and those who appear to be other for whatever reason. Christ dwells in them as well as us! Let us remember how Christ welcomed us when we were missing the point of life, unconditional love and wholeness, and how Christ nurtured us along in spite of our ignorance and stubbornness. As contemplatives we are able to consent to God in all the changes of life, to know Christ is in all, and to look for Christ in all His disguises and perhaps to find Him.

What a time to say Yes to God, to consent and to bear Love into the world here and now. We need to do that with intention, a strong wish, and action to see our desire manifest in a way that will bring more Christ into our lives and into the Earth. It's a blessed New Year! ☸



**THE CHURCH of
CONSCIOUS HARMONY**
A CONTEMPLATIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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

MINISTERS

Tim and Barbara Cook

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Begeman
Pamela Begeman
Mary Anne Best
Eric DeJernett
Donald Genung
Jim McCune
Lauri Raymond

MUSIC

Susan Boulden, Director
musicdir@consciousharmony.org
Sue Young

YOUTH EDUCATION SERVICES

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

OFFICE

Mon-Fri 8:30 am-4 pm
Donald Genung, Business Mgr
bizmgr@consciousharmony.org
Lisa Genung, Office Mgr
officemgr@consciousharmony.org

BOOKSTORE

Virginia Maxwell, Manager
bookmgr@consciousharmony.org

NEWSLETTER

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

AN INVITATION

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN IN COMMUNITY
... to participate in intention and will to God
... to renew your commitment to transformation into Christ,
... to move ever deeper together as a community
of intention, practice and devotion.
All glory to God.

*In Him were created all things in heaven and on earth,
the visible and the invisible;
... all things were created through Him and for Him.
He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
... For in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell,
and through Him to reconcile all things.*
Colossians 1:16-17, 19

Jesus Christ in His divinity is in the hearts
of all men and women and in the heart of all creation,
sustaining everything in being.

This mystery of oneness enables us to emerge from the Eucharist
with a refined inward eye,
and invites us to perceive the mystery of Christ
everywhere and in everything
... [in] the consciousness that is being transformed.
Christ's Spirit in us perceives the same Spirit in others.

In the Eucharist all creation is transformed into the Body of Christ,
united with His divine Person, and thrust into the depths
of the Father forever and ever. Even material creation
has become divine in Him.

Thomas Keating, *Contemplative Outreach News*, Winter 1997

I find joy in Your testimonies ... Glory to God forever!
Psalm 119:14



A SPECIAL INVITATION ...
TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TENTH MAN SCHOOL

My Father is at work until now, so I am at work. John 5:17

The sole aim of the Tenth Man School is to be a transforming agent of the Spirit, assisting the process and reality of *theosis* for one another, that each may “*know myself as Christ, as my Father knows me,*” fully human, fully divine, always guided by the Spirit and rooted in Eternal Love.

Membership in the School is a declaration of intentional relationship to the Divine Mystery that is God and to all creation. It is a formal expression of a personal hunger and commitment to be transformed into Christ and to live a committed life in service of this aim.

A formal member of The Church of Conscious Harmony may choose to deepen his or her commitment to transformation into Christ by becoming a member of the School. The term of this commitment is for 2017.

A School member commits to a Rule of Life and *actively participates* in an intentional community that includes three lines of Work.

The School’s Rule of Life is:

1. Twice daily Centering Prayer practice
2. Daily reading of Scripture
3. Daily reading of the Work of Inner Christianity
4. Daily conscious movement (e.g., tai chi, yoga, walking)
5. Small group participation, as available
6. Commitment to attend Centering Prayer retreats annually
7. Seva group or YES program participation
8. Tithing
9. Regular attendance at Sunday Services

The intention to participate in the Tenth Man School is to be submitted by January 29 (contact the office for an acceptance card). Orientation and induction will be held February 3, 2017.

We are the recipients of a multi-faceted living Tradition, the strands of which have been woven together into a new rope for us to jump for.
Tim Cook

In the Name of the Transcendent Father, and of the Omnipresent Son, and in the Name of the Immanent Holy Spirit, the Divine Indwelling.
Amen.



CCH Bookstore

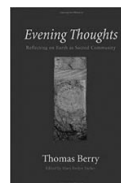
SUGGESTED TITLES FOR JANUARY



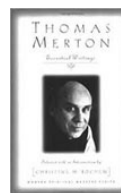
Our One Great Act of Fidelity
by Ronald Rolheiser



Invitation to Love
by Thomas Keating



Evening Thoughts
by Thomas Berry



*Thomas Merton –
Essential Writings*

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



Find joy in Your testimonies ... Glory to God forever! Psalm 119:14

ANNUAL AIM: INFLUENCING ALL

ONE GOD INFLUENCING ALL by Eric DeJernett

The New Story of the universe is a biospiritual story as well as a galactic story and an Earth story.

Above all, the universe as we now know it is integral with itself throughout its vast extent in space and throughout the long series of its transformations in time. Everywhere, at all times, and in each of its particular manifestations, the universe is present to itself.

Each atomic element is immediately influencing and being influenced by every other atom of the universe.

Nothing can ever be separated from anything else.

The Earth is a single if highly differentiated community.

This is the quintessential way of understanding the universe.

Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts*

We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time.

Thomas Merton, *Essential Writings*

One week after the Presidential election, I was attending a 10-day retreat in a former Capuchin monastery in Upstate New York. The monastery looks out over the Hudson River in the middle of a large natural preserve area. Once serving as both seminary and monastery for the Capuchin Order, it is now owned by the Garrison Institute, which offers an impressive array of programs around the core idea of grounding social action in the wisdom of contemplation. All of the movable Christian icons have been replaced with Buddhist images, wall coverings and statues whereas the crosses, stained glass and Christian icons embedded in the structure remain. The mishmash of history, ideologies and commonality of deep spiritual faith at a level above traditional Christian or Buddhist categories is not lost on me. Neither is the history of contemplation in the building or on the expansive grounds.

The retreat was structured

around a new video series by Fr. Thomas Keating titled “God is Love, The Heart of All Creation.” In the series Fr. Thomas seamlessly knit together a Christianity including evolution, science, art, psychology, cosmology, sex and a playful God. This is a Christianity based on deep listening in the Silence to the voice of God on a daily basis. He quotes wisdom teachers from all traditions. This 92 year old Trappist monk is matter-of-fact about Christ’s presence in the Big Bang and our relatively recent evolution in consciousness as human beings—and how much further we have to go in developing human consciousness. This inclusive Christianity speaks deeply to me.

During a sharing circle, a young woman new to Centering Prayer asked if this was some sort of minority view of Christianity based on the ideas of a forward thinking monk. This question snapped me out of my comfortable relationship with Centering Prayer and the

influences of Fr. Thomas over what is now a twenty year period of time. She found Centering Prayer about five months ago and this was her first retreat. She was in tears the day before seemingly overwhelmed by the deep Presence palpable during the retreat. I thought back to how I found Centering Prayer and I realized, maybe for the first time, that it found me!

About 25 years ago a good friend suggested I check out an open class on Wednesday evenings lead by a minister of a small church in an office building on Steck Avenue. He said he thought I would be interested in the ideas being shared. To be honest, I had no interest in going to some off-beat start-up church in an office building so I never attended. This recommendation came from someone I trusted and with whom I liked to share deep ideas. He dated my yoga teacher, a person that introduced me to yoga and helped refine my random attempts at meditation. Despite all of this, I was completely against trying his suggestion.

Soon thereafter my life began to unwind. The script I had written for myself and clung to so tightly was falling apart. Divorce, death of a parent, cancer in the other parent and financial challenges all piled up around me. I remember clearly standing in the dining room of the house I shared with my ex-wife and young child as I was moving out seeing it all as a photograph being

torn to bits. I could not see it at the time, but there was a tremendous amount of Grace surrounding me and giving me help in many forms. A close friend handed me *The Course in Miracles*, which I clung to for the next year like a life preserver. Another friend recommended I visit a deep tissue body worker that started to unpack a lifetime of concealed wounds. She then recommended a therapist steeped in *The Course in Miracles* and Neuro Linguistic Programming. A breath therapist came, grief workshops came. I was so hurt at that time that I was actually open to receive help. I look back on the people that helped me at that time as gifts coming from the communion of saints.

As I began the process of pulling my life back together I also began to date. I spent about a year and a half with a wonderful woman from the Jewish tradition. She had been through her own difficult divorce and we did a lot of healing together. She had been wounded by the Jewish faith of her upbringing and was trying out a Christian church—the same one in an office building on Steck Avenue I had so adamantly resisted years before. Several times she suggested we go and I made excuses. Finally, one Sunday morning after spending the night at her house she said “let’s go, no excuses.” I can humbly say now that my last and final excuse was that I didn’t have anything to wear. Those of you that know me are undoubtedly smiling. She said

it was a casual church and I didn’t need church clothes to attend. Out of excuses, I put on my clothes from the night before and we attended.

I remember walking into what felt like a make-shift sanctuary with stackable chairs wondering how long this place would make it. The minister began his sermon by reading an account from the days when the U.S. was no more than a young colony. It expressed the wisdom of the Native American people and the contradiction of the missionaries teaching virtue from their strange book when their actions did not match their words. He closed with a prayer blessing all peoples of all faiths as children of the one God. I was in tears. They were tears from the heart, a heart that was hearing Truth. Needless to say, I returned, brought friends, and watched them cry similar tears. This was not the church of my upbringing where answers came in neat packages that never really made sense. I feel, and have always felt, the hunger for one God that includes all people, science, evolution, the starry galaxies, quantum physics, gay, straight, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Republican and Democrat as one human family here on this far-off planet somewhere in the Milky Way.

The church with the stackable chairs was my new home on Sunday mornings. I started reading some of the books offered in the little book store and my daughter started

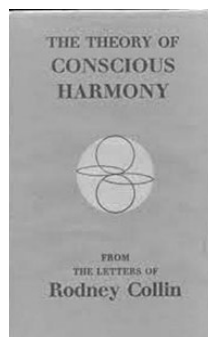
attending. I signed her up for the Christmas play and when all the children turned on their battery-operated red hearts at the end I cried those same tears. The little make-shift church somehow bought property and was planning to build a new building. I volunteered to transport some of the stackable chairs to a shared facility used while the new church was being built. It was there that I took the Introduction to Centering Prayer class. Once again, I fought what was being handed to me and that I now find so valuable to my life. I attended the initial day of training, but felt I was just too busy to attend the follow-up meetings.

Fast forward about 20 years and I eventually watched all of the Fr. Thomas videos, attended countless Centering Prayer retreats, including retreats led by either Fr. Thomas or Fr. Carl Arico and I have visited St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass where Fr. Thomas now resides. I walked out crying those similar tears of the heart after my first mass at St. Benedict's. I was crying so hard that I could not speak. Abbott Joseph patted me on the back and gave me a knowing smile. It was not the first time he had seen those tears. Today I feel that Fr. Thomas, his teachings and Contemplative Outreach are significant contributors to Christian Contemplation in the world and have enhanced my life in a way that words cannot express.

And yes, I helped move the

stackable chairs over to the newly constructed church and donated \$300 to buy one of the permanent chairs still in the sanctuary. I also slid my life-saving copy of *The Course in Miracles* into the wall of the sanctuary during construction after the minister invited the congregation to place meaningful icons in the straw bale walls prior to applying the stucco finish. The make-shift church I fought so hard from attending has been my spiritual home for these past 20 years.

So here is the question I am left with, what else is God trying to hand me that I am saying no to or making excuses not to accept? I know I am surrounded by Grace at all times--especially in my darkest moments. I know that the communion of saints are reaching out to me through people and influences to help me evolve and grow in Love. My wish for this New Year is that I say *yes* to that which is being offered from Above for my highest good and for the good of a world shared by the one human family. ☸



THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

My Father is still working, and I also am working.

~John 5:17

HIGHER HELP

All true messages are the same, come from the same place. What is being transmitted is very great, but we catch only one interpretation of it and think that is the whole. Yet we have to do that too, and no doubt will be shocked and pummeled until our vision reaches the scale that is needed.

If we have heard the authentic voice of higher help speaking through another person, it is so that we may have faith to address that help innerly in our hearts and recognize the answers that are spoken there. We must do this, and I promise you that we shall not be disappointed. ☸

Rodney Collin, *The Theory of Conscious Harmony*, page 163-164. 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.

OUR FUTURE MINISTER

Several years ago, Tim and Barbara announced their anticipated retirement in January 2018. The Rev. Peter Haas has been selected to succeed Tim as Minister of The Church of Conscious Harmony. Peter has had a relationship with CCH for almost ten years with Tim serving as his mentor for much of that time. Peter's developed his own relationships with our most significant teachers over the years: Thomas Keating, Bernadette Roberts and Ilia Delio. He also met his wife, Shannon, at CCH.

Peter is currently serving as Minister of a church in San Antonio. He will join CCH in November and assume the Minister role in January 2018.

We are deeply grateful for Peter and look forward to a long and fruitful future with him. Until he begins, you may bump into him at a Thursday *Work of Inner Christianity* class or Wednesday evening contemplative service. You can also follow his blog at contemplativechristians.com.

Please welcome Peter and Shannon when you see them!



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.

30TH GUIDELINE



Regular periods of silence and solitude quiet the psyche,
foster interior silence, and initiate the dynamic of self-knowledge.

JANUARY CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

Lessons in Truth

Jan 10-Mar 7 Tuesdays 7:30-9 pm
Call the church office to register.

Simple Explanations of Work Ideas

Jan 12-Feb 16 Thursdays 7:30-9 pm
Call the church office to register.

Centering Prayer Retreat

Jan 14 8:30 am-4:30 pm
\$15 Bring a potluck dish to share.

5-day Centering Prayer Retreat

Jan 20-24 Cedarbrake, TX
Contact the office for information.

Intro to Centering Prayer

Jan 21 8:30 am-3:15 pm
+6 consecutive Mondays 7:30-9 pm
\$75 Call the church office to register.

MONTHLY

1st Sundays

Bring non-perishables for Caritas

Gurdjieff Music

Jan 17 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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THE JOURNEY AHEAD

*One thing I ask of the Lord;
this I seek:
to dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord,
to visit His temple.
Psalm 27:4*

It's a journey that never ends, because what is home?

It is "to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of our lives."

And that house is our participation
in the divine life through grace.

... We are talking about a communion
and a unity that is incomparable,
that is oneness.

Thomas Keating, *The Gift of Life: Death & Dying, Life & Living*

