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# THE MARK

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



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# Purity of Heart Is Identity with God

by Tim Cook

The power of clever advertising jingles and messages to make lasting impressions is legendary. One that is indelibly imprinted on my mind was in use for most of the last century in print, radio and TV ads that saturated the American cultural consciousness with a powerful idea of what purity is. Ivory soap ads were filled with images of clean-cut, immaculate looking women, and it was touted as being 99 and 44/100 percent pure—so pure it floats. Now I really don't have to know the resumes of the models, or the physics and chemistry of such purity, to get the message. That stuff must be really pure.

So, of course, the impression of purity suggested by those soap ads comes right up whenever I consider the Beatitudes from Jesus' beautiful Sermon on the Mount and come to,

*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)*

From the time I was a kid in Vacation Bible School, it was clear to me that if that is the kind of purity it takes to see God then there was absolutely no chance for me to see Him. I believed I had done too much living to float, and I doubted that I could even come near to a 50/50 ratio on that purity scale.

But age and experience have shown me that our behaviors are just the surface of our lives and there is far more to us and our relationship with God than our actions. God is not a "guy in the sky," the "man upstairs," a cop, a judge, or a scorekeeper of my sins who I need to placate or hide from. God is Love, Spirit, all-pervading and everywhere present. Our true identity is Spirit. Since we are expressing our lives and experiencing ourselves through thought and physical action we, as a species, have become confused. Forgetting our spiritual nature we've become identified solely with our physical aspect and have lost touch with the infinite reality of Divine Love, which unifies and makes whole both our physical and spiritual natures in a new, reborn feeling of being. This error of self-concept and its consequent focus on behavior instead of identity has left us miserable and fruitlessly looking for happiness in the material world, the domain of the senses, where it can never be found.

The word "blessed," as Jesus uses it in the Beatitudes, means simply happiness. He is giving us the clue to living truly happy lives. This happiness, however, is spiritual and

so requires us to raise our attention beyond the physical domain where we could never "see" anything spiritual. The purity He is referring to is a purity of our affection, the degree of our desire for union with God who waits silently within us. Our purity is more clearly revealed by where we are habitually placing our attention than by what we do:

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:21)*

Jesus goes on to explain that none of us can serve two masters. We can serve God, the interior Spirit, or we can serve the outer, sensory, physical world. We'll always prefer one over the other and make it the primary focus of our attention, our affection. There is no doubt about the direction of Jesus' guidance for us. He is absolutely and utterly clear in telling us not to concern ourselves about our material well-being. We are to seek the interior Kingdom of Heaven first, and everything else will be taken care of.

The purity, then, that leads to seeing God, is actually a matter of identity; of who or what we conceive ourselves to be. Are we creatures of the world, separate and on our own? Or do we truly belong to

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*“For where your treasure is,  
there will your heart be also.”*

Matthew 6:21

God, The One who lives in and as all Creation? Does our heart belong to that which lives us or to the world we see with our senses? The entire spiritual journey is a movement of identity, the feeling of “I” from the exterior to the interior of our lives. By degrees He leads us home, deeper and deeper into His presence within us. Our part is to see the good in this gifting journey, to wish for its fulfillment with all our hearts and to cooperate with the process through the graceful disciplines of daily spiritual practice and application of the tools of the Work of Inner Christianity in the ordinary moments of life.

Let’s be clear that the efforts we make are empowered by God. This is not a self-improvement program and we can’t do it by ourselves. The help we need to discover the purity of our identity with God is always present and available but we can only access it through our own attention; through calling out for Divine assistance and trusting God to answer in His own time and in His own way.

One of the most profound utterances for God’s renewing help came from David in his 51st Psalm. It has graced countless journeyers for countless generations. You

can pray it from your heart as you are reading this, as I am praying it from mine as I am copying it.

And please remember as you pray it that the word “sin” is not accusing us of being bad. It is simply describing the state I’ve just described above; of living in a state of separation from the Reality of God and the resultant acts that proceed from our ignorance of Truth. All of this is forgiven through Christ. We simply accept it as we pray for God’s merciful assistance in creating the New Jerusalem in our personal consciousness.

*Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions. Wash  
me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin. For  
I know my transgressions, and  
my sin is ever before me. Against  
you, you alone, have I sinned, and  
done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your  
sentence and blameless when you  
pass judgment. Indeed, I was born  
guilty, a sinner when my mother  
conceived me. You desire truth in  
the inward being; therefore teach  
me wisdom in my secret heart.*

*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall  
be clean; wash me, and I shall be  
whiter than snow. Let me hear  
joy and gladness; let the bones that  
you have crushed rejoice. Hide  
your face from my sins, and blot  
out all my iniquities. Create in  
me a clean heart, O God, and put  
a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your  
presence, and do not take your holy  
spirit from me. Restore to me the  
joy of your salvation, and sustain  
in me a willing spirit. Then I will  
teach transgressors your ways, and  
sinners will return to you. Deliver  
me from bloodshed, O God, O  
God of my salvation, and my  
tongue will sing aloud of your  
deliverance. O Lord, open my  
lips, and my mouth will declare  
your praise. For you have no  
delight in sacrifice; if I were to give  
a burnt offering, you would not be  
pleased. The sacrifice acceptable  
to God is a broken spirit; a  
broken and contrite heart, O God,  
you will not despise. Do good  
to Zion in your good pleasure;  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,  
then you will delight in right  
sacrifices, in burnt offerings and  
whole burnt offerings; then bulls  
will be offered on your altar. 🕯*

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# Centering Prayer, a Gateway to the Present Moment

by Barbara Cook

Each time we sit down to practice our Centering Prayer, we are giving our will to God in the only place He ever is, the present moment. God cannot be found in the past and He cannot be found in the future. He is the God of here and now. So as we say yes to God in each one of our prayer appointments, we find ourselves here in the present moment too.

Fr. Thomas Keating teaches that the human ego is a *bridge over the present moment*. If we ponder this statement we can see how it means that our false self (me, myself and I) is continuously attending to the past or the future whether in daydreams or imaginary conversations with people who are not really there but rather exist for us as images in our heads. Having our attention here, in the present moment, is actually

a rare experience for most people. So during our 20-30 minutes of Centering Prayer twice daily, our intention to be here now draws us into union with God who can only be experienced here in the present moment.

Our body is here. It is always in the present moment. As we begin our Centering Prayer, we relax the body and let it fall into stillness, experiencing its oneness with God. We feel that oneness in our hearts as we silently repeat our sacred word; reaffirming our intention to be with God in the here and now with each repetition. Each time we notice that our attention has engaged a thought or sensation, we know that we are being drawn out of the here now moment and into reflections of an imaginary past or future. So we ever-so-gently return to our

sacred word and reenter the present moment. This deceptively simple practice even translates into our everyday lives to gradually relieve us of the extraneous thinking that keeps us out of the here and now.

As our prayer practice develops and we sit twice a day every day, we are not only developing our relationship with God, but we are exercising our consciousness and teaching it to live in the here and now. Now is the sacred moment. When we are aware of being here and now, we know we are in the sacred moment. When all reflecting filters of the self are transcended, there is nothing left but this sacred world with these sacred circumstances and these sacred people. Our lives have then entered another world. Jesus called it the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. ☸

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## Heard at Retreat

...from some who have experienced the time away with God.

"Being on a multi-day silent retreat provides a unique opportunity for intimacy with God. A true safe haven for your spirit where nothing from the outside—no phone calls, emails, letters, media—can hijack your consciousness away from the work God has in store for you. The silence alone works miracles, and when combined with tools like the Welcoming Prayer or Forgiveness Practice, you are empowered to embark on a new level of being in the world with all the world presents. It's healing and transformative. Just do it!!"

*continued on page 5*

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## CCH Bookstore

September reading suggestions

# The Strength of Simplicity

The realization that God is active in all that happens at every moment is the deepest knowledge we can have in this life of the things of God. It is a continuous revelation, an endlessly renewed traffic with God; the bridegroom is enjoyed without any stealth or secrecy, not in the wine cellar or the vineyard but openly and freely and fearing no one. It is peace, joy, love and a feeling of being at ease with God who is seen and known—or, rather, believed—to be present and always active in the most faultless way in every happening. It is a foretaste of paradise, which is, in this life, only sensed imperfectly through a veil of shadows, but when it comes to the moment of our death, the Holy Spirit, who secretly moves all the pieces on the board of life by his continual and fruitful activity, will say: “Let there be light.” Then we shall behold all the riches which faith alone knew were hidden in those depths of peace and contentment with God, who is with us all the time and by our side in all we do and suffer.

When God gives himself thus, the commonplace becomes extraordinary, and so nothing appears to be out of the way. The path along which we go is itself so extraordinary that there is no need to ornament it with extraneous wonders. It is a miracle and a constant delight, yet, in itself, has nothing about it to dazzle our senses, but it does turn all the ordinary affairs of life into things which are rare and wonderful. ☸

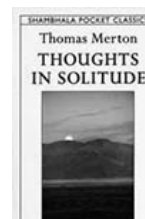
Jean-Pierre de Caussade, translated by John Beevers, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, page 117. Caussade was an eighteenth-century French Jesuit priest and spiritual writer. His teachings focus on “The Sacrament of the Present Moment.”



*The Sacrament  
of the Present Moment*  
by Jean-Pierre De Caussade



*Abandonment to Divine Providence*  
by Jean-Pierre De Caussade



*Thoughts in Solitude*  
by Thomas Merton

*The Naked Now*  
by Richard Rohr

*God Beyond Time*  
by J.H. Reyner

Bookstore and Library Hours  
Monday-Friday 9 am-3:30 pm  
Sunday 9-10 am & 11:30 am-12:30 pm

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“These retreats are truly a gift that shows the presence of God in His silence, His word, and His relationship with us.”

“There is never enough time in the silence ... but today, every moment of the silence was Golden ...”

“I arrived feeling that I was negotiating some rough waters and left confident that God’s Love is sufficient for all.” ☸

The 2014 retreat schedule is available at [www.consciousharmony.org/calendar](http://www.consciousharmony.org/calendar).



*God looked at everything He had made, and He found it very good.* Genesis 1:31

# Annual Aim: A Sacred World

## The Sacrament of the Present Moment

by Shirley Lanehart

Do we not know  
that by all created things,  
and by every event  
God's love desires  
to unite itself to us,  
that He has ordained, arranged,  
or permitted everything that concerns us,  
everything that happens to us,  
with a view to this union?  
... If this is true,  
why should not each moment of our lives  
become a form of communion  
with the love of God?  
... The Holy Eucharist, it is true,  
has a sacramental efficacy which the  
'sacrament of the present moment'  
cannot have,  
but on the other hand,  
how much more frequently  
can this form of communion be repeated?  
Jean Pierre de Caussade,  
*The Joy of Full Surrender*

*All things came to be through Him  
and without Him nothing came to be.  
What came to be through Him was life,  
and this life was the light of the human race.*  
John 1:3-4

We are summoned into the presence of God  
by the fact of our birth,  
but we become present to God  
only by our consent.

Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God*

When asked to write this article, I thought I knew something about this subject. After all I have been on the spiritual journey for many years, learning how to live a contemplative life in the world, welcoming the presence and action of God within through Centering Prayer, and saying "yes" to many of the transformational offerings at The Church of Conscious Harmony. I have had numerous mystical moments where the present moment was wide open to me, even in the small, ordinary, and mundane routines of life. I have experienced bliss, quietude, a still point where everything was happening and the awareness that I was not doing any

of it. What an amazing and peaceful place to visit! I would love to share that I am always aware of this state of being, but that would be a lie.

Those glimpses of Presence in the moment seem to come by Grace alone and quite unexpectedly no matter how much I wish them to come. Those sacred glimpses are out of my hands. Whereas, when I partake in the Holy Eucharist, it *is* tangible and I can feel it in my hands. With full understanding in that moment, that act, that decision to receive communion holds the promise, hope, and actuality of being both human and Divine *now*.

The quote for this month's aim is from Jean Pierre de Caussade's

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*The Joy of Full Surrender*, which you can read in the left column. What I find so challenging is the part of the quote that I have underlined.

“Do we not know that by all created things, and by every event God’s love desires to unite itself to us, that He has ordained, arranged, or permitted everything that concerns us, everything that happens to us, with a view to this union?”

Everything...? In my early twenties I received a glimpse of what surrendering to the present moment is like when my daredevil cousin coaxed me into riding one of the tallest and fastest roller coasters in the world (at that time)! I was terrified of roller coasters, but she always had a way of getting me to follow her lead. Something unusual happened when they put the bar down over my lap. It came to me to “just ride one rail at a time.” Ride one rail at a time turned into a mantra in my head, then the words faded and it actually happened. A state of being came over me that could only be described as

*the peace of God that surpasses all understanding* (Philippians 4:7)

I witnessed other people with

scared faces and loud screams while I was perfectly calm and at peace. The roller coaster went up high and dropped down low, but I was riding it one rail at a time with no fear or anxiety. I wanted to tell everyone, hey just ride this one rail at a time. The peace I found during that experience gave me much more than the intended thrills of the ride. When it ended my cousin noted that I was “weird” on that ride and, of course, I was ready to go again. I had found perfect peace in the most unlikely place!

That experience of riding one rail at a time, without anxiety and fears, and the practice of welcoming each sacred moment just as it is has led me to the understanding that the presence of Christ is the absence of fear. Simple thought but not always an easy practice.

Last month with my father in home hospice, my mother in the emergency room, and my son struggling with serious problems, the present moment was not what one could call bliss, peace, nor any of those feel-good adjectives. The present moment held grief, anger, love, joy, sadness, and every emotion possible to a human being—all at one time. The more I resisted feeling these emotions, the bigger

they became. Then I asked these questions. Is this kind of anger allowed? Yes, in the sacred present moment. What about confusion and grief? Yes, they are allowed in the sacred present moment. What about my father’s stubbornness? Surely I know more than he does about how he should be taking care of himself. How can I allow him useless suffering by his taking unnecessary risks? My dad’s journey, no matter what it looks like to me, is allowed in this sacred present moment. This was the most challenging and difficult situation I have ever been in. It turns out that challenging and difficult is also allowed in this sacred present moment. This situation was only bearable by letting go of personal preferences and opinions; by welcoming all thoughts, feelings and sensations; and by remembering His Presence is the absence of fear. Everything that happens to us is an opportunity to become a form of communion with the love of God.


It was during this time that I came to understand why people put the elderly in storage (nursing homes). There seems to be a cultural belief that the elderly are no longer useful and shabby so we can store them out of sight. After weeks of being with my aging and

dying parents, I was beginning to understand that strategy because my parents were difficult, stubborn, and childlike. They smelled of old age and death. Their personalities were not becoming passive like I had expected or rather imagined. Nor was mine! Nothing was happening according to my will. There were many times that I would have given anything to not have been there to witness and care for them in this difficult stage of their lives. And yet, how could I not? There in the midst of suffering was a love that kept me in tears. There, before my eyes, was the full circle of humanity. The dignity, the love, the pain and the chaos were and continue to be all


readily available during this process. To not say yes, to try and change the moment to fit my imagination was *my* useless suffering. To try and avoid feeling into all of the emotions simply wasn't an option. I had to practice saying "yes" to my "no;" and saying "yes" to my own hypocrisy.

Ultimately there is only one answer—yes—to everything. A consent to God's love just as it is in this and every sacred moment no matter what appears before us.

"We are summoned into the presence of God by the fact of our birth, but we become present to God only by our consent."

Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God*. 

## At Any Moment

From time to time one reaches the point where the pressure of life seems almost unbearable. The important thing is to keep the flavor of the new and the longing for the miraculous in spite of everything. Sooner or later circumstances change, a crack opens in life and new possibilities again present themselves. But what enters at that moment depends exactly upon what one has been longing for during the time when nothing out of the ordinary was happening. We have spoken many times about crossroads in life. Between one crossroad and another one cannot change roads, only go on in the same direction. Shall we arrive at the next crossroads tomorrow, in six months or in five years? We do not know. We can only be ready to reach it at any moment. 

Rodney Collin, *The Theory of Conscious Harmony*, page 167.



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](http://www.consciousharmony.org)

MINISTERS  
Tim and Barbara Cook

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Pamela Begeman  
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Jim McCune  
Lauri Raymond

MUSIC  
Susan Boulden, Director  
[musicdir@consciousharmony.org](mailto:musicdir@consciousharmony.org)  
Sue Young

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[childmin@consciousharmony.org](mailto:childmin@consciousharmony.org)  
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Don Hale, Youth Director  
[youthdir@consciousharmony.org](mailto:youthdir@consciousharmony.org)  
David Jenkins, Assistant to the Youth Director

OFFICE  
Mon-Fri 8:30 am-4:30 pm  
Donald Genung, Business Mgr  
[bizmgr@consciousharmony.org](mailto:bizmgr@consciousharmony.org)  
Lisa Genung, Office Mgr  
[officemgr@consciousharmony.org](mailto:officemgr@consciousharmony.org)

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Virginia Maxwell, Manager  
[bookmgr@consciousharmony.org](mailto:bookmgr@consciousharmony.org)

NEWSLETTER  
Sandra Ely, Editor  
[garzaely@swbell.net](mailto:garzaely@swbell.net)  
Carol Hagar, Design  
[lifeisart@austin.rr.com](mailto:lifeisart@austin.rr.com)



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# Heard from Our Youth

Some of the members of the HYPED (Harmony Youth Practicing Evolving Devotion) group made their annual pilgrimage to The Lama Foundation in New Mexico and St. Benedict's Monastery in Colorado in June 2014. Everyone was deeply moved by their pilgrimage. When asked to share how their personal experiences relate to The Sacrament of the Present Moment, here are the compiled responses by our Youth Director, Don Hale:

“At one of our evening devotionals at Lama, I said something that moved those around me to the point of tears. In that moment, I felt *in* the present moment.”

“When I am in my prayer sometimes I feel like I am flying, but it doesn't matter. It's just something else that is happening and I am centered somewhere else deeper.”


“Being in the moment to me is like having something like a giant fire hose of distractions cut off and I am free to just be silent.”

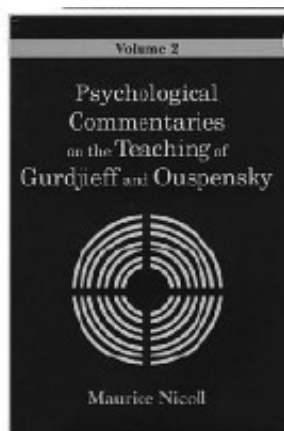
“I can't explain the feeling of being surrounded by such positive vibes by these heartwarming and welcoming people. They come from so many diverse religious and yet they look at you as just another soul and see you for you. And it is one of the most beautiful things. Each step I take up there [at Lama] is so grounding, it's rejuvenating and unearthly.”

“I remember all of us just loving everyone there. It felt like all my little holes were being filled so that I could keep all my love inside instead of letting it drain out. I love all the people at Lama. Lama is forever a very sacred place in my heart.”

“During morning devotionals, one of the readings was about the student that asked the master ‘how do I find God?’ And the master says, ‘that's a silly question, that's like teaching the fish what water is.’ I really felt like the fish that had discovered water. I was living in it and enjoying it. Lama taught me tools to bring back and remember to live in water. And I feel like that's my aim for the year to remember that I'm always in water and that it's feeding me.”

“Lama is really just a window that shows us what we can get inside of us anywhere. It's not just at Lama. We have that intentional contemplative community right here. Lama makes it possible for us to see what's always available if you are intentional.”

“The whole experience of the moment is too hard to put into words but if I had to choose one word, it would be profound. From the moment we entered the monastery, I went deeper than I have ever gone before.” 



# The Work of Inner Christianity

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

## Transformation of the Moment

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Let us come to some of the main ideas which deal with the question of how a man can change his being. The whole of this Work is about a change of being—that is, a change of the level of being at which a man naturally is—in ordinary life. What must be first realized here is that every one of us is at a certain level of being. In this connection we must visualize a vertical direction or a ladder extending as it were from below upwards and having many rungs on it. People—all of us—are on one or another of the rungs of this ladder that stands vertically below and above us. This ladder is quite different from time—namely, from past, present and future which we can imagine as a horizontal line. In order to make my meaning clearer, I would like to ask you how you imagine time—that is, the passage of time from the past into the present and into the future. Usually, the kind of mechanical hope that people hold on to is connected with the idea of time—namely, that in the future things will be better, or

they themselves will be better, and so on. But this ladder of which we are speaking and which refers to different levels of being has nothing to do with time in this sense. A higher level of being lies immediately above all of us at this very moment. It does not lie in the future of time but in ourselves at this very moment, *now*. All work on oneself, all personal work which deals with stopping negative emotions, with self-remembering, with not being identified with one's woes and troubles, with not making accounts, etc., etc., is concerned with a certain action that can take place in oneself at this moment—now—if one tries to be more conscious and remembers what it is we are trying to do in this Work. That is to say, the work is about a certain transformation of the instant, of the moment, of the present, through the action of this Work. For example, a man finding himself in the depths of despair, if he observes the situation and tries to remember himself, or tries to give himself any other kind of conscious shock at that particular

moment, such as remembering his aim—that is, in other words, if he tries to “transform himself”, to transform his mechanical reaction to the circumstances that surround him at that moment—may find to his astonishment that quite suddenly everything is changed, his mood of depression vanishes, and he finds himself in a new atmosphere from which he wonders how he could have been in his former state. This represents a momentary change in the level of being because everything has, not an exact level of being, but a general average level of being in which there are higher and lower degrees. But here we are talking about the application of the Work to change in regard to the level of being. We are talking about what I might call the third stage of a man ... *the making of personality passive so that essence can grow.* (A)

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, pages 2-5. 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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## 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

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Guideline



Our basic core of goodness is our true Self.

Its center of gravity is God.

The acceptance of our basic goodness is a quantum leap in the spiritual journey.

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## SEEDS

### Wherever We Are

God approaches our minds by receding from them. We can never fully know Him if we think of Him as an object of capture, to be fenced in by the enclosure of our own ideas.

We know Him better after our minds have let Him go.

The Lord travels in all directions at once.

The Lord arrives from all directions at once.

Wherever we are, we find that He has just departed

Wherever we go, we discover that He has just arrived before us.

Our rest can be neither in the beginning of this pursuit, nor in the pursuit itself, nor in its apparent end. For the true end, which is Heaven, is an end without end. It is a totally new dimension in which we come to rest in the secret that He must arrive at the moment of His departure; His arrival is at every moment and His departure is not fixed in time.

Thomas Merton, *Seeds*, page 119.

## SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Visit [consciousharmony.org](http://consciousharmony.org)  
for a complete listing of events

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Sep 13

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat  
8:30 am-4:30 pm  
\$15 Bring a brown bag lunch.

Sep 24 (four consecutive Wednesdays)

New Member Classes  
7:30-8:45 pm  
Contact the office to register.

### MONTHLY

1st Sundays

Bring non-perishable items for Caritas

Sep 16

Gurdjieff Music 7:30-8:30 pm

Sep 20

Community Workday

### WEEKLY

Sundays

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

Tuesdays

Centering Prayer Support Group 7:30-9 pm

Wednesdays

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

Thursdays

Work of Inner Christianity Class 7:30-9 pm

Fridays

Devotional Service 7:30-8:45 pm

### DAILY

Mondays-Fridays 7-7:35 am

Centering Prayer Service in Theosis Chapel

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Recordings of services are available  
through the Bookstore and online at  
[www.consciousharmony.org](http://www.consciousharmony.org)



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*From His fullness,  
we have received grace upon grace.*

John 1:16

## Being

Jesus could have been an austere ascetic  
like John the Baptist, but instead  
He chose a middle way.  
He ate with sinners and drank wine,  
two things that the disciples of John  
would not think of doing.

He talked to women in public,  
something that a rabbi at that time  
was not supposed to do . . .

Jesus was free from the conformity level  
of morality that His contemporaries  
were locked into . . .

In the example of Jesus' life,  
being is more important than doing.

It is not how successful one is,  
but who one is that counts.

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

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