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# THE MARK

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



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# I WANT TO SEE

by Tim Cook

Charles Dickens classic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities* begins, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” That phrase sounds almost hackneyed now, we’ve heard it spoken so often in a kidding or casual way, almost the way we think and speak of weather conditions. Yet a moment of thoughtful consideration of our knowledge of human history will reveal that things have pretty much always been like that and that they are now like that too. Outer conditions and the inner consciousness of human beings are reflections of each other. Conditions are as they are because we are as we are in every stage of our evolution as a human race.

Until I understood man’s place in this inconceivably vast Great System of cosmoses along with our relationship to the infinite web of interrelated being that is our common place of arising, I was utterly baffled about why we couldn’t “get it.” Then an ancient current of a living Tradition came into my life like a message-in-a-bottle sent into the current of time by like-minded beings who once,

long, long ago, wondered these same wonderings and longed the same longings. What they passed down was that our species, as we are, is incomplete, unfinished and asleep in a mass hypnosis of seeming separation and isolation from our Source and our world.

Dr. William Welch, was also influenced by that Tradition. In his 1972 memoir, *What Happened In Between: A Doctor’s Story*, he describes our human condition clearly and unsentimentally,

“What is true with us as individuals is multiplied a thousand, a million-fold when we set out to plan on a grand scale what we acknowledge we cannot do with our own lives.

“That is not to assume that our choice lies only between staying with the status quo or accepting to plan for more disasters. Perhaps prognostications by computers will help. But more important, if man is not to be wholly destroyed by his folly, we would better begin to accept as literal fact the ancient admonitions

of the saints and teachers who tell us, each in his own way that man is asleep, deficient in consciousness, and that we live in the dank cellars of ourselves while balconied rooftops beckon.

“It is a desolate fact that our social environment is not more than the massive projection of manifestations of the sleepwalkers of which it is composed. And until at least some of its constituents wake up, it is naïve to imagine that public life can manifest a level of consciousness that does not exist in the private lives of those of which it is a reflection. This is either the counsel of despair or our last, best hope, depending on how we see ourselves and what we take to be the meaning and obligation of our brief existence on this planet.”

Our personal experience of despair or hope depends “on how we see ourselves and what we take to be the meaning and obligation of our brief existence on this planet.”

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These profound words offer each of us an opportunity to ponder them slowly, carefully, thoughtfully, intentionally, purposively and personally.

How *do* I see myself?

What *do* I take myself to be?

Am I asleep?

Am I awake?

How would I know?

How can I be certain?

What *is my* meaning?

What is the meaning of Life?

Do I feel an obligation to the Creator? ... to Creation?

Am I reading over these pondering opportunities quickly or have I actually allowed them to convey the critical degree of importance and urgency that lets them speak to the discontent I feel deep within and to touch it with a ray of Divine possibility? Have I truly been touched by the hope and have I accepted my obligation?

I take it to be no accident that there is such emphasis in Jesus' healing ministry on the healing of blindness. We have been blinded to the reality of our absolute

dependence on God, blinded to the unforeseen consequences of our selfish attitudes toward our planetary home, blinded to the indivisible unity of the human race and to the impact of our personal choices on the rest of creation. Hope is with us however, because this blindness can be healed. And when Christ restores us to the mystical sight we had as little children, we see and understand that our whole human history of war, oppression, barbarism and all the rest of the "best of times/worst of times" scenarios has been played out in a dream of separation from which we can be awakened if we simply recognize our situation and ask God for the help we need.

Obligation then follows, not as a burden to be dutifully endured; but as an opportunity to participate and to play a purposeful and meaningful part in the ongoing unfoldment of the human race, of which each of us is an inextricably embedded member. Now our lives can have meaning and purpose that goes beyond, but does not deny our lesser roles as members of families,

consumers, economic factors, units of production and such. When we are graced to see these roles in a greater context they take on new meaning and aliveness and become the very stage for our personal spiritual journey. That journey develops our souls and transforms our identity as our attention and insight gradually move from the context of the culture of seeming separation to the experience of conscious union with the real presence of the Living God.

Ilia Delio has edited a new book, *Personal Transformation and a New Creation*. In the first essay, Ursula King writes,

"Spiritual work is demanding, not light work; its benefits cannot be gained without effort. To lead women and men of today to spiritual awakening and a deeper awareness, to a new spiritual consciousness and an actively engaged spiritual practice, is the great calling of our time. It demands many spiritual resources. It requires great integrity, deep honesty and truthfulness, and

a passionate commitment to the life of the spirit, to become 'attuned to the rivers of longing the flow between the divine and human heart.'"


We are all longing for something. That longing is an active magnet that is drawing us toward that which we long for. If our longing is for anything less than God we are certain to join the generations that came before us in being dissatisfied and disappointed with the conditions we attract. If we long for the healing and restoring gifts of Christ we will see for ourselves and understand how to play out our part in the cosmic unfoldment of man.

We are not bad people, we are not flawed and our great sleep is not our fault. We are simply unevolved. The human condition always draws the generations into its hypnotic vortex. That is the "worst of times" part. But it is also, always causing us to cry out for the help we need to awaken from the nightmares of our God-starved world. That is the "best of times" part because He always responds.

"... As Jesus was leaving town, trailed by his disciples and a parade of people, a blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, was sitting alongside

the road. When he heard that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by, he began to cry out, 'Son of David, Jesus! Mercy, have mercy on me!' Many tried to hush him up, but he yelled all the louder, 'Son of David! Mercy, have mercy on me!' Jesus stopped in his tracks. 'Call him over.' Throwing off his coat, he was on his feet at once and came to Jesus. Jesus said, 'What can I do for you?' The blind man said, 'Rabbi, I want to see.' 'On your way,' said Jesus. 'Your faith has saved and healed you.' In that very instant he recovered his sight and followed Jesus down the road." (Mark 10:46-52 *The Message*)

The Christ is no longer passing by. He is here. His risen Presence is here, within and all around us. We may not see Him but neither did Bartimaeus ... at first. Christ is always asking each of us, *What can I do for you?* I pray that each of us responds in faith and truth, crying out, *Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, I want to see.*

This is the great calling of our time, each of us calling out in faith for the divine help we need, the help our hearts are longing for. 

## CCH BOOKSTORE

SUGGESTED TITLES FOR OCTOBER



*Discernment*  
by Henri Nouwen



*The Biology of Belief*  
by Bruce Lipton



*Discernment Matters*  
by Mary Margaret Funk

BOOKSTORE AND LIBRARY HOURS

Open Monday-Friday 9 am-4 pm  
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# LORD, LET MY EYE BE SINGLE

by Barbara Cook

Everyone who has experienced a religious conversion has been healed of blindness. Prior to that great opening we saw a flat, two-dimensional world. Through that great gift, a whole new deeper, fuller world of experience and understanding opens to us, a world previously unseen by our former vision. Before this there is no experience of God. After this healing grace comes upon us, we realize that this is our Father's world and that we are his lost-then-found sheep or his beloved child that is welcomed home. A whole new vision, unsuspected before now, opens before us as we begin our spiritual journey.

As our journey progresses we may from time to time forget how blind we were before we were given new eyes to see and new ears to hear and we may mistakenly credit this capacity to our own efforts, thinking, "I can see. Now I've got it handled." It is easy to forget that we are still sheep, beloved sheep, but no less still sheep. Newly sighted but still lacking in spiritual discernment and discrimination, we may go bumbling around the barnyard trying and sampling the many things that our newly awakened sight reveals until we wander off like partially-sighted sheep only to get lost and caught in another previously unsuspected thorny thicket. I've been that sheep. Have you?

When Centering Prayer came into my life and became a daily practice, I found my direction, my personal true north. I learned that what I had been seeking had always been seeking me. It became clear that God dwells in me and all around me and that he connects me to himself when I simply consent to his loving presence in interior silence. Centering Prayer gave me a way to be still, to know God.

I know that I am not seeing perfectly. I know there is more, even though I now know God in a deeper way, as his beloved child. I remember what it was like at my

first conversion and how my eyes were opened to the amazing world that had been completely invisible to me in my former blindness. I know too that he wants to heal my spiritual vision even more until I see our ever-evolving world through the perfect eyes of Christ. Christ only sees the One. Jesus said,

*The eye is the lamp of the body: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*  
(Matthew 6:22)

My prayer for all of us on the spiritual journey is for each of us to be given simple, single-eyed vision, as we wait in trusting silence. ☉

## 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.

### 27<sup>TH</sup> GUIDELINE



Reflection on the Word of God in scripture and in our personal history is the foundation of contemplative prayer.

The spontaneous letting go of particular thoughts and feelings in prayer is a sign of progress in contemplation.

Contemplative prayer is characterized not so much by the absence of thoughts and feelings as by detachment from them.



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

## ANNUAL AIM: BLESSED

*Blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear* (Mt. 13:16).

I SEE HOPE AND HEAR GOOD NEWS by Allan Craig

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Seeing.  
We might say that the whole of life  
lies in that verb.  
... Fuller being is closer union. ...  
And union increases only through  
an increase in consciousness,  
that is to say in vision.  
... If to see is really to become more,  
if vision is really fuller being,  
then we should look closely  
... in order to increase  
our capacity to live.  
... Try to see ...  
a *whole* which unfolds.  
... When the scales fall  
from one's eyes  
and he discovers that  
he is not an isolated unit  
lost in the cosmic solitudes,  
he realizes that  
a universal will to live  
converges and is ... in him.  
Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,  
*The Phenomenon of Man*

I become a transparent eyeball;  
I am nothing; I see all:  
the currents of the Universal Being  
circulate through me;  
I am part and parcel of God.  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*

*What eye has not seen,  
and ear has not heard, and what has not entered  
the human heart, what God has prepared for those  
who love Him.*  
1 Corinthians 2:9

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This month's theme from Matthew 13:16 is particularly enjoyable for me to write due to the many new ways I have come to perceive and experience events, ideas, thoughts, and emotions these days, particularly in a more inclusive way.

In a lecture given by Michel de Salzman, he had quoted a Muslim poet with a great line that seems to fit me to a T: "we would like to have wings in order to fly toward God, but... it is not forbidden to go in that direction, even limping." In spite of myself, I continue to get in

my own way – just hobbling along. But as long as I'm headed in the right direction, it seems to be quite okay by me.

Now for me "eyes to see and ears to hear" means perceiving in a somewhat deeper and/or more connected (integrated) way. To exemplify, at a recent Work of Inner Christianity class I attended at the Church of Conscious Harmony, I connected with the following phrase from the daily scripture reading: *for there is nothing hidden except to be made visible; nothing is secret except to come to light.* What

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I heard was what I then referred to as the definition of “hope” and/or the “good news.” And that which I heard, undoubtedly is a result from changes that have occurred in my personality and in my way of taking and relating to things, ideas and people. One of the big differences I’ve observed is the change in my propensity to hide or conceal my wishes, my feelings, my very existence from others and even myself, which now has morphed into something more open, more transparent, and even inclusive. An “event” occurred in my life in which I was completely exposed to public scrutiny, and I lived to tell about it! I was able to discern that the habit of hiding, which I had relied on for the sake of preserving my inner integrity, was a manner of being that is constrictive and self-defeating. Whereas the opposite behavior of being more open, available, and more transparent is unrestrictive and liberating. This was a great change in perspective for me to behold, for which I am grateful.

### **Humiliation and Self-Surrender**

Ten years ago, in front of friends and well-wishers, a federal judge sentenced me to 18 months in prison. In this humiliation, I actually felt as though I was being stripped naked in public (*nothing*

*hidden except to be made visible*). Without going into a lot of detail, I had gotten to this point due to a fear of the negative emotions that might be engendered from any conflict that might possibly result if I were to use the “no” word. Prior to sentencing, I had been given the choice of “self-surrender” to prison should I be assessed a sentence to serve. I elected “self-surrendering” as a means of affording me time and space to shut down my so-called life just in case I didn’t receive probation. One nice thing about self-surrender, if you should find yourself at the place where you have to make the choice, is that you get to say your good-byes, even to your false-self.

### **Seeing in New Ways**

Having been qualified and assigned to a minimum security federal correctional institution (no fence), I told Tim Cook, as my good-bye, that I imagined I was headed to the “federal monastery.” My characterization of the facility could not have been more prophetic. There, at minimum security in Beaumont, I found “presence” and a form of a society or culture that many people have wished for through the ages. After being processed in, I was told to go over to the dorm-like building where

someone would assign me a bed (a space). When I walked through the door an inmate asked me if I were new, and on my affirmation, he said, “Wait here. I’ll go find the guy who assigns beds.” Another inmate, came up to me and asked me if I had soap, a toothbrush and toothpaste. No one is allowed to bring anything into the monastery when they come in, so I said, “No.” He said, “Follow me.” I followed him to his cubicle where he had a cache of personal items he had purchased at the commissary. He explained that his church deposited money into his account from which he made these purchases. I turned around and another person asked me if I had a mug – a 12 oz. doubled hulled, plastic mug that could be bought at the commissary and with which one could make coffee or tea in the microwave. I had none, so he said he had a spare and offered it to me. Before this time, I had avoided gifts in general, but now for the first time in my life, I found myself saying, “sure,” “why not,” and “of course.” It didn’t matter what the person looked like, where they came from, or why they were serving time there, it seemed incongruous to turn down the beneficence or kindness of someone else. The same guy offered me a spare paddle-lock for my locker, which I later came to

look on as more of an inconvenience as opposed to a necessity as peace of mind in this particular society was free; there was no need to try and lock it up. It was November and fairly cold, and on my way back to the “dorm” after breakfast, I was offered a spare knit cap for my ears, again something that someone had to buy with his own money. It seemed as if people in their own little ways were being good Samaritans and looking after the well-being of their neighbor.

### External Considering

I have story, after story, after story to tell of this pervasive attitude of external considering; nothing big, just a way of relating to each other in our particular circumstances. This was an egalitarian society with a very minimum of status and/or posturing. No one was better than anyone else and no one was worse. Skin color and background simply did not matter. There were social mores and rules to be sure, but there was no enforcement of any kind. There was no need. I guess everyone had “better things to do” than to get upset by someone else. I wrote letters describing the environment. By return mail I would be asked if I was going to be willing to leave when my time was done, and I’d reply, “Not to worry, my bags are packed.” It was still prison – choices


were limited.

I attribute the general attitude of external considering to various things. As there was no fence or locks on the doors, that which restrained us from leaving was our own volition. We were self-motivated. We had to answer more to ourselves rather than some authority. I think the biggest factor was that people had an appreciation that we were all equals; we were all in the same boat. In close quarters, the idea of “we **are** our brother’s keeper” has more appeal. My lament was that people in the larger world cannot seem to see that we are all in the same boat, albeit the edges of the world boat are more obscure and difficult to see.

### One in the Same

In Beaumont I developed an aim to take back into the world-at-large the presence I had found and my new world views. On re-entering mass-culture, however, I lost my presence in a couple of weeks. The greater world is far more complicated and has many more distractions than the monastery. And besides as we remember, Allan was not gifted with light wings to fly, rather he heads where God leads him – kind of hobbling along. Smiling at the thought, I see that I prefer the journey this way – it is richer moving slowly

and limping along. It affords one the opportunity to see new things in new ways, to take incoming impressions differently. These life experiences have given me a new way of seeing – metanoia – and an appreciation of the value of the trials and tribulations we encounter. I know and understand that these 15 months had not been taken from me, rather they had been **given** to me. Before this series of events, my avoidance of trials and tribulations was part of the basis for my hiding in the first place. What a blessing to have traversed the compass full circle.

Beaumont – the monastery – where people lived in relative harmony certainly was a special case with limiting factors, which would be next to impossible to replicate in culture-at-large. In that container, there was little reason for status or posturing with no property, no females, and no titles. My wondering is *if* people can live together harmoniously in a limited way, perhaps they may come to see Life that way in the larger world. At least it’s no longer a cause for me to lament. I believe God is in all and all is in God. As I continue along the spiritual journey toward God and deepen my understanding of many teachings and experiences, what I now see and feel is a version of “hope” and “good news.” 




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# TO BELIEVE IS TO SEE THINGS IN GOD'S LIGHT

The future does not rest with us. It is not what we make of it, for God alone has the planning of it. The most we can do is to accept trustingly His divine action, which is the expression of His love. We must not think so much about people, and things and events: that side of life is so often depressing. We should look rather at Him Who with kingly power controls these shifting scenes, making them fit in according to the plan of His infinite love. We should steep ourselves more and more in this spirit of faith, which alone is reasonable and true. That is how God sees things. In all He does or permits, He sees and desires only His own love, and that is what we should see and desire too.

It is quite true that the world seems in a very bad way. It is full of evil and hatred. How can we see love, where everything points that other way? We do not see it: we

believe it. To believe is to see things in God's light; to leave everything to Him Who says: 'Your bodily eyes and your reason see only evil, but this is superficial. At the bottom of everything is Love ... Believe My word'. Faith does, indeed, call for a very big sacrifice, but this same faith gives us a sense of security and peace, which might almost be called infinite, so surely does it rest on the word of God Himself. Here we have the profound secret of Christian serenity in the midst of the most painful trials, which are only passing, whereas the word of God is something eternal. 

Pages 96-97, *They Speak by Silences*, by a Carthusian

## Multi-Day Centering Prayer Retreats at Cedarbrake

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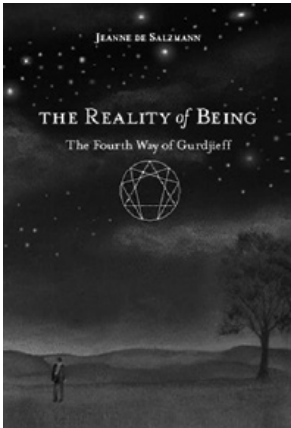
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# THE WORK

## OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

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

### SEEING IS AN ACT

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The question is not what to do but how to *see*. Seeing is the most important thing—the act of seeing. I need to realize that it is truly an act, an action that brings something entirely new, a new possibility of vision, certainty and knowledge. This possibility appears during the act itself and disappears as soon as the seeing stops. It is only in this act of seeing that I will find a certain freedom.


So long as I have not seen the nature and movement of the mind, there is little sense in believing that I could be free of it. I am a slave to my mechanical thoughts. This is a fact. It is not the thoughts themselves that enslave me but my attachment to them. In order to understand this, I must not seek to free myself before having known what the slavery is. I need to see the illusion of words and ideas, and the fear of my thinking mind to be alone and empty without the support of anything known. It is necessary to live this slavery as a fact, moment after moment, without escaping from it. Then I will begin to perceive a new way of seeing. Can I accept not knowing who I am,

being hidden behind an imposter? Can I accept not knowing my name?

Seeing does not come from thinking. It comes from the shock at the moment when, feeling an urgency to know what is true, I suddenly realize that my thinking mind cannot perceive reality. To understand what I really am at this moment, I need sincerity and humility, and an unmasked exposure that I do not know. This would mean to refuse nothing, exclude nothing, and enter into the experience of discovering what I think, what I sense, what I wish, all at this very moment.

Our conditioned thought always wants an answer. What is important is to develop another thinking, a vision. For this we have to liberate a certain energy that is beyond our usual thought. I need to experience “I do not know” without seeking an answer, to abandon everything to enter the unknown. Then it is no longer the same mind. My mind engages in a new way. I see without any preconceived idea, without choice. In relaxing, for example, I no longer choose to relax before

knowing why. I learn to purify my power of vision, not by turning away from the undesirable or toward what is agreeable. I learn to stay in front and see clearly. All things have the same importance, and I become fixed on nothing. Everything depends on this vision, on a look that comes not from any command of my thought but from a feeling of urgency to know.

Perception, real vision, comes in the interval between the old response and the new response to the reception of an impression. The old response is based on material inscribed in our memory. With the new response, free from the past, the brain remains open, receptive, in an attitude of respect. It is a new brain which functions, that is different cells and a new intelligence. When I see that my thought is incapable of understanding, that its movement brings nothing, I am open to the sense of the cosmic, beyond the realm of human perception. 

Jeanne de Salzmann, *The Reality of Being – The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff*, pages 205-206. 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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# STEADFASTNESS IN HOPE

*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. (1 Corinthians 2:9, KJV)*

What relationship is there between what we do here on earth, and what we hope for in heaven? The first Christians never stopped rejoicing at the sight of what they were hoping for—for at every moment, they believed they were seeing heaven open before them. Suffering, disrepute, torture, cruel deaths—none of these things had the power to dishearten them. They were intimately acquainted with God’s infinite generosity in rewarding such sufferings—and they never thought they suffered enough. They were transported by joy when they were judged worthy of some deep humiliation.

And what about us? Fainthearted souls that we are, we know nothing about suffering, because we do not know how to hope. We become overwhelmed by the slightest crosses—often even those we bring on ourselves because of our own pride, rashness, and weakness! ⚠

*The Complete Fénelon, page 177. François Fénelon was a seventeenth-century French archbishop, controversial theologian and spiritual thinker. Surrounded by the splendor and decadence of the most powerful court in Europe, he chose a different path, one that took him through enormous inner suffering – he lost his job, his fame, his money, and many of his friends – and into a relationship with God that few have known. His words have been widely read for three centuries.*

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## SEEDS

The deepest level of communication is not communication,  
but communion. It is wordless.  
It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept.  
Not that we discover a new unity. We discover an older unity.  
My dear Brothers [and Sisters], we are already one.  
But we imagine that we are not.  
And what we have to recover is our original unity.  
What we have to be is what we are.

Thomas Merton, *Seeds*, page 65.

## OCTOBER CALENDAR

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

### SPECIAL EVENTS

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

Two-Day Commuter Retreat  
Oct 16 8 am-5:30 pm  
Oct 17 7 am-4:30 pm  
\$100 Pre-register.

Intro to Centering Prayer  
Oct 22 8:30 am-3:15 pm  
+ 6 consecutive Tuesdays 7:30-9 pm  
\$75 Pre-register.

New Member Induction  
Oct 30 during service  
Reception following service.

### MONTHLY

1st Sundays  
Bring non-perishables for Caritas

Gurdjieff Music  
Oct 18 7:30-8:30 pm

Community Workday  
Oct 29 9 am-noon

### 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

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Recordings of services are available  
through the Bookstore and online at  
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## ORDINARY TIME AND THE CROSS

In the Name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
And in the name  
of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

By signing ourselves externally,  
or just interiorly,  
we affirm our identity with Jesus and  
His redeeming activity.  
By making the sign of the cross, we accept  
the human condition in union with Christ,  
our redemption in Christ,  
and union and unity with God,  
to which the Cross leads.

The sign of the Cross is the symbol  
of the whole transformative process,  
empowering us to enter with Jesus  
into the bosom of the Father,  
and allowing Jesus to renew the whole gamut  
of His redeeming activity  
in our specific humanity.

Thomas Keating, Unpublished Notes

