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# THE MARK

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



COMMUNION

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# THE MONK WITHIN YOU

by Tim Cook

In his great priestly prayer, recorded in the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus prays to his Abba for his disciples and for the humanity that was yet to be born on earth,

*I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them to the truth; your word is truth.*

In last month's *The Mark*, I wrote about my own experience as it became clearer and clearer to me that I could not keep the conscious memory of God's word. Over and over I would forget that God is real, God is truth. I would fall back under the hypnotic spell of the world and experience myself and my life as totally belonging to the world. The world and its never-ending recurrence of threatening and enticing possibilities held my attention like super-glue and I could rarely look away, to actually gaze at the truth of God within me. The world that held my fascinated attention was never, is not now and never will be truth. But it is oh so fascinating.

The only problem with

fascinated attention is that our life follows it. I learned that principle when I was learning to ride motorcycles in the Rockies and the lesson almost cost me my life. "The bike always follows your eyes," shouted my terrified friend, as my bike finally came to a stop, within a few feet of going over a cliff. "The bike always follows your eyes! You were looking where you didn't want to go and the bike was following you! Always, always look toward where you want to go and the bike will follow your eyes!" Adrenaline pumping, brain screaming, absolutely convincing ... lesson learned.

That principle was what led me to realize that my consciousness was, like the motorcycle, following my attention. I really didn't want fear, terror, financial stress and insecurity, gossip, family issues and office politics to own my life; but they still captivated my attention. And it was unavoidably clear that my consciousness was very obviously following my attention. I saw that my life was hurtling toward a gaping cliff of oblivion that the Beatles referred to as Nowhere Man, and it scared me enough to make a life-saving choice.

I knew that if I was ever to be "in the world but not of it," I was going to have to structure my days in a way that liberated enough of my attention to be aware of the always present Presence of our Abba. So, as I wrote last month, I began to conceive of myself as an urban monk. I didn't know any monks at the time, but I knew why they live as they do. They live to give their attention and lives to God. I wanted that too.

A booklet on the monastic life that I got from our friends, the monks at New Camaldoli Monastery, states it simply but profoundly,

"There is something of the monk in every person, a kind of universal archetype. To understand monasticism, it is necessary to get in touch with this archetype, the monk within. And this is just as necessary for someone who has spent years living in a monastery as it is for the person who is approaching monastic life for the first time.

"Monastics – monks and nuns – are called to manifest the universal monastic archetype and to realize it completely, not for themselves only but for all humanity. Responding to this vocation, they experience the

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benevolence and compassion which the hidden God pours out upon all creatures. As they grow in the monastic way, they learn to show compassion to others, without making distinctions and without passing judgement. And they know that they are never alone, even though they may dwell in the desert, far from human society. “When a Christian is also a monastic, he or she manifests not only the universality of a religious need, but also the identity of being a Christian. To be a Christian means to be in Christ.”

We are always in Christ. The monk in us wants to always remember that. If we want to and are willing to direct our attention toward where we want to go, we can do it anywhere, even right smack-dab in the middle of the big city. We’ve all got the archetype and it can be developed and lived-out anywhere. The secret is in looking where you want to go.

As I said above, this choice and dedication to a way of life, conceived as an urban householder monk, was made over 40 years ago, before I actually knew any monks

or had ever visited any monastery. But I cannot avoid noticing that the principle, “Always, always look toward where you want to go” has never, not for one second, stopped revealing itself as the operative principle in my life and in the ever-unfolding life of our community. Monks, nuns and monasteries are all over my life and the life of The Church of Conscious Harmony.

Our teachers have all been monastics. Bernadette Roberts lived for 10 years in a cloistered Carmelite Monastery. Fr. Thomas Keating and Fr. William Menninger have been Trappist monks most of their lives. The loving friendship of Fr. Joseph Boyle, the Abbott at St. Benedict’s, has softened so many of our hearts that it would be hard to count them. Sr. Ilia Delio, who recently lit us on fire during her two-day workshop at CCH, was a cloistered Carmelite nun for four years and is now a Franciscan nun.

The teachings and inspirations we follow all trace back through Carmelites, St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross and through a long, rich, lineage of Benedictines, Dominicans and others right back to the Desert Fathers and Mothers of early

Christianity. Boris Mouravieff traces our practice of the Work of Inner Christianity to the monks of Mt. Athos in Greece, where these teachings have been lived out, practiced and handed down in the 22 monasteries of this rare monastic republic for over 1500 years. And for reasons that only God knows, all of it has ended up here at the Church, offering transformation to those of us who hunger to experience the Presence of God.

Does our life, our consciousness really follow our personal attention? Boy, I’ll say it does. God even sent me Barbara, a wife who also loves the monastic lifestyle of an urban monk and He created a church full of friends that love looking in this spiritual and religious direction too. Maybe this is the year that you will join us in living out Jesus’ priestly prayer that we live in the world, but be not of it. Everything we need to consciously live, truly live, as urban monks and nuns has come right here to us in Austin, Texas at The Church of Conscious Harmony, our monastery without walls. Keep your eye on the prize. The earth needs you. We all need you. ☸

Note: Tim’s article in the January issue of *The Mark* can be found at [consciousharmony.org/read-listen/the-mark/](http://consciousharmony.org/read-listen/the-mark/).

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# INTIMACY WITH GOD

by Barbara Cook

St. Theresa of Avila warned us that the very greatest error we can make is to pray as though God is not HERE. In truth God is nearer to us than we are to our very selves. Christ makes it absolutely clear,

*I am in you and you are in me and we are in the Father. Ask anything in my name and it will be given to you.*

In my experience that is the hardest thing to comprehend; we are one in God and God loves us more than we love ourselves.

The best way to come into the experience of that love and presence is to open ourselves to God in daily communion through silent prayer, Centering Prayer. That's how we have twice-daily meetings with God, as He is in Himself, deeper than our little ideas of what He is. Simply reminding ourselves that we are in God and that God's dwelling place is in us, is a way preparing ourselves for that meeting. Then we can sink into that Presence and just let God reveal Himself beyond

words. Fr. Thomas Keating says that He reveals Himself through the x-ray eyes of faith. Then, instead of knowing *about* God, we experience Him directly and we don't need to have the "proof" of seeing Him with our natural eyes, or hear Him or even "feel" Him. We know that He is here and we realize that, if I am here God is most certainly here. By entering into regular, steady, relationship with the God who is HERE, we begin to progressively KNOW He is here, beyond all that

*"I invite you to jump into your life with God and be amazed as you experience yourself being made whole in His love."*

our sense tell us.

Through this relationship our friendship with God deepens to become the experience of intimacy, intimate communion just like any human relationship that is faithfully exercised in and through all types of conditions over a long, long time.

In saying this, I know that it is not necessary for those of us

who have taken up the practice of twice-daily Centering Prayer with persistence and regularity to hear it. The fruit in our lives is obvious. For those who have yet to consent, I invite you to jump into your LIFE with God and be amazed as you experience yourself being made whole in His love.

Just imagine a world where everyone knows that they are a child of the right-now Living God. We would all also realize and act as if all the people we meet are also God's

favorite child. We would all know that He meets our daily needs in love; that healing and wholeness are the order of the day; and that love, forgiveness and generosity reign supreme. A taste of a God-centered life clearly tells of the new world that will come to be when enough of us have opened to the experience of God's healing love. ☺

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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.

### 31<sup>ST</sup> GUIDELINE



Solitude is not primarily a place  
but an attitude of total commitment to God.  
When one belongs completely to God,  
the sharing of one's life and gifts continually increases.

## MULTI-DAY CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS AT CEDARBRAKE RETREAT AND RENEWAL CENTER

Mar 24-Apr 2	10-day Lenten	\$825
June 16-25	10-day	\$725**
Aug 14-23	10-day	\$725**
Sep 15-20	6-day Welcoming Prayer	\$495
Dec 1-7	7-day Advent	\$625

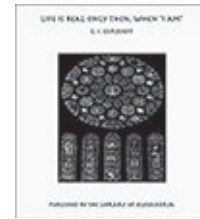
\*\*Double rooms only. All prices are double room occupancy rates.  
Single rooms, if available, are an additional \$15/night on a first-to-register basis.  
Contact the office for further information and registration.

“These retreats have been transformational for me...  
there is simply no other way to experience  
this level of quiet and intimacy with God!  
Everything in this lovely place is thoughtfully  
placed and designed with simply loving God.  
Driving into the entrance, I feel peace and I am so grateful.”

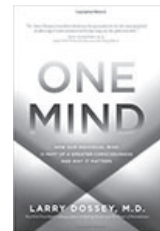
~from a retreatant's feedback survey

## CCH BOOKSTORE

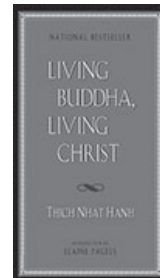
### SUGGESTED TITLES FOR FEBRUARY



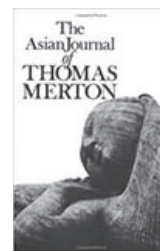
*Life is Real Only Then, When I Am*  
by G. I. Gurdjieff



*One Mind*  
*How Our Individual Mind Is Part of a  
Greater Consciousness and Why It Matters*  
by Larry Dossey



*Living Buddha, Living Christ*  
by Thich Nhat Hanh



*The Asian Journals of Thomas Merton*  
By Thomas Merton

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



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

## ANNUAL AIM: COMMUNION

COMMUNION AND WHOLE-MAKING by Peter Haas

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And 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, Asian Journal

I've been hungry for spiritual community all my life. Along the way, I've learned that spiritual community is a bit different from solo spirituality. While I cherish the joys of the contemplative, inner life, what I really delight in, is living and doing the spiritual journey together with others – in worship, prayer, study, discernment and friendship.

More than anything else, it may have been this hunger for spiritual communion with others that encouraged me on my journey into the ministry. I loved God. Yet more than that, I wanted to love God with others who loved God. In my experience, I have come to know that the inward life nurtures my external life with others, teaching me the important principle that *union with God energizes communion with others.*

Looking back, I probably had a call to the monastic life, but as a Protestant teenager, with no prior

exposure to monasticism, at that time, I had no idea monasteries still existed. I wasn't even aware that I could ask the question: "Where can I go to love God with others?" Had I asked my Protestant youth pastors that question, they probably would have said, "Youth group at church!" Or, "Sorry, Peter, you'll have to wait till heaven!" Alas, I went to seminary!

### Contrasts

As I've reflected upon this month's theme of communion, I recalled that when I first started in ministry, in most cases, the extent of doing spiritual life together meant an hour of worship every Sunday morning – in at 9 a.m. and out at 10 a.m. As folks left the Sunday morning service, I often heard them say to me, "see you next week!"

As a young pastor, I quickly discovered that, sadly, by and large, the congregation did not want spiritual community beyond

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Sunday morning. I did not take it personally, but I felt sad – as if somehow I had misjudged what ministry and church life was really all about. Perhaps I was naïve. Didn't every one hunger for God? Doesn't everyone wish for deep communion with others? Was being a pastor really just another job?

So, it was life-giving to my being when I first started visiting The Church of Conscious Harmony (CCH) ten years ago. Very quickly, I intuitively knew I had found my spiritual community. I didn't have to be a "professional" here. I could just be on the spiritual journey in the company and communion of spiritual friends. During Sr. Ilia Delio's visit to CCH last month, she coined a phrase to express the essence of the kind of spiritual community occurring here. She called it "quantumly-entangled-hearts." I love it! And what a unique entangled communion it is!

When I first started exploring CCH, the first thing I noticed was the role silence plays in holding the community together. Rather than wordy-ness, the silence holds us. Over the years, Centering Prayer and the Centering Prayer retreats provide a space for the silence to help me enter a deeper, consciously consented union with God. The silence also helps me connect with those whom I was wordlessly praying with. For example, at the conclusion of

retreats, I was amazed to feel how intimate the time together was, even though no one had talked to each other – sometimes for ten days! Somehow, we grew to know each other at a deeper level in the silence – a wordless communion, which Thich Nhat Hanh, in *The Heart of Understanding*, describes as *Interbeing*, and what Sr. Ilia Delio called *whole-making*.

Through my twice-daily practice of Centering Prayer, I am learning the art of how to inter-be, especially with those aspects of myself that resist communion with others, or react to those my surface personality finds challenging. I am continuously amazed how Centering Prayer enables us to be a community that consciously chooses and co-creates gracious harmony amidst our human polyphony. This harmony is unfolding not because we're all perfect. Rather, it seems to be occurring because we are simply willing to partake in the symphony of silence beneath the sound and fury of our day-to-day lives.

The second thing I noticed when I first came to CCH, was how important the Thursday evening Work of Inner Christianity class was to the core of our communion and whole-making. With the honest sharing, the vulnerable confessions, and the humor of being human together, the Thursday Work class has become the highlight of my week. In many ways, the cumulative experience of participating in the

Thursday Work community has helped me grow and evolve through the layers of myself that I could not have seen on my own. And for that, I am very grateful.

### **Commune**

Spiritual community hasn't just been theoretical for me. I understand how precious healthy Interbeing is and how difficult it is to cultivate healthy, co-created wholemaking. I learned this first hand early on in my life. When I was nine years old, my folks decided to join the Highway Missionary Society (HMS). We left Brookfield, Wisconsin and moved to Oregon. The HMS was a group of about ninety Christians seeking to recapture the spirit of early Christian community-life together.

The commune, or "community" as we liked to call it, lived on eighty acres along the Applegate River near Grant's Pass and Wilderville. On "the Land" there was a large "main-house" where we ate our meals, had our meetings and gathered for daily and weekly worship. At its peak, there were ninety people officially "in" the community, and each week brought new arrivals and departures.

On the Land, my mom, dad, brother, sister, and I lived in a 300 square foot A-frame. The A-frame had no running water, plumbing or electricity. We had an outhouse bathroom nearby and a wood

burning stove for heat and simple cooking. Yes, it was 1981.

At the time, I both loved it and loathed it. For a kid, it was the best of times and the worst of times. I loved the Sunday evening worship services out on the main-house porch. I loved exploring along the river and viewing the big snow covered mountains in the distance. I loved building things in the workshop. I loved reading by the wood burning stove in the library all winter long, avoiding the rain and fog.

And I loathed the community's leader. I loathed the lack of personal freedom and the control the "Elders" had over us to do even the most basic of things – such as receiving mail from family back home. I missed being so far away from my extended family back in Wisconsin. I loathed the names a few kids at school called me because of where I lived. I loathed being poor and that I could no longer watch my favorite shows on TV. These "loathings" turned out to be just a few of the reasons I really needed the grace of unloading in the healing warmth of the divine therapy!

Thankfully, my healing began early when my mom "escaped" us from the community when I was twelve years old. My mom's parents bought us four round-trip plane tickets for a two-week vacation back to Wisconsin. While I thought we would return to the commune after two-weeks, we never did. We left everything there, including my

dad. My mom had no intention of returning – to the commune or to her husband. We rejoiced with her decision.

### **Radial Field of Love-Infused-Light**

I share this childhood experience because I've seen first-hand both sides of community life. When there is healthy community such as we enjoy at CCH, grounded in conscious and loving communion, people tend to flourish. And when there is community grounded in fear and control, people tend to wither and regress, and as a result, relationships often fragment, leaving what Sr. Illia called, "deconstructed wholeness."

On my journey so far, I have

learned and deeply believe that communion in community is a very rare and precious gift. It deserves to be protected and cultivated wherever it is found – with wisdom, kindness, joy and clarity of communication.

That is one reason I am so blessed by the miracle that is CCH in my life and yours, which makes our mutual attending to CCH's ongoing flourishing our common destiny and destination. And since it is ours, it falls to all of us to deepen and evolve our ongoing consent to be a spiritual family of consciously chosen harmony in community, so to become a radial field of love-infused-light – not just for our local communion, but also – unbelievably – for the evolving cosmic body of Christ. ☸

## SEEDS

All men seek peace first of all with themselves. That is necessary, because we do not naturally find rest even in our own being.

We have to learn to commune with ourselves before we can communicate with other men and with God.

A man who is not at peace with himself necessarily projects his interior fighting into the society of those he lives with, and spreads a contagion of conflict all around him.

Even when he tries to do good to others his efforts are hopeless, since he does not know how to do good to himself.

In moments of wildest idealism he may take it into his head to make other people happy; and in doing so he will overwhelm them with his own unhappiness.

He seeks to find himself somehow in the work of making others happy.

Therefore he throws himself into the work.

As a result he gets out of the work all that he put into it: his own confusion, his own disintegration, his own unhappiness.

Thomas Merton, *Seeds*, page 130.



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# 2017 AIM: COMMUNION AN INVITATION FOR YOU AND REFLECTION FOR ALL

At the beginning of each year, an annual aim is presented to the Church community. All are invited to join in community ... to participate in intention and will to God ... to renew your commitment to the spiritual journey, moving ever deeper together as a community of intention, practice and devotion ... and, in so doing, manifest *conscious harmony* with all life. All glory to God!

As a part of the annual aim, a special theme is presented for each month to support a focused study of the annual aim. This month, the monthly theme and annual aim align in "Communion." As we reflect and look deeper at this everlasting mystery, here are a few observations in the gift of words, so to speak, for further reflection.

The English word communion derives from the Latin word

*comunio*. The pre-fix *co* conveys the joining or union aspect and the root word *munio* conveys the dwelling aspect. In Latin, *munio* was often used to describe an enclosed dwelling, such as a home, city or storage shelter. As a verb, it can mean the act of protecting or encircling to safeguard. Some of these notions can still be heard in our familiar English words municipality and munitions hiding in the Latin root *muni*.

Going deeper, it is easy to spot another powerful impression hiding within the language. As we take apart *munio*, we find *unio* and even briefer *uni* conveying the essence of our English word *union*, which we understand to mean not just oneness, nor twoness; not manyness, nor aloneness, but a co-union—a co-in-dwelling—a co-togetherness—a co-life. Communion! ☺

To learn more about the 2017 annual aim "Communion" or to participate and receive a beautiful packet of the monthly themes, please contact the Church office. An invitation will be provided to you.



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

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# THE WORK

## OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

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

### A SPECIAL CONDITION FOR EXCHANGE

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Our independent efforts, each by ourselves, are insufficient. A group is the beginning of everything, a group of people seeking to live in a more conscious way. A group can succeed better to maintain the effort. Some of us are more vigilant, more responsible. We help one another. But the appearance of this form has to be recognized, not imposed. We have to feel the need for coming together, to be present with others to share a relation of reciprocal attention. To have a basis for a conscious relation, each member must know and accept himself. Each must feel the need for the group, for a world traversed by a certain current of thought and feeling. He has to know that he needs it, and must not forget that he needs it.

We are, of course, speaking of a group formed for work on oneself that is not on the level of ordinary life. It is animated by thoughts that are different from those of ordinary life, and also by different feelings.

Its existence has to be marked by events that are essentially different from those of ordinary life. The first event is the active and committed search for a center of gravity of vigilance in oneself. A centered attention may be drawn in different directions, but it always returns to the center. When we are dispersed we can learn nothing new. This is the “old man,” the automation who pretends to know, who mouths useless words about ideas that are supposedly understood. The one whose attention is centered seeks to express only the essential about his search and his observations. He is different, a “new man.”

We are in a group because we need help to find a quality in ourselves, a state in which we can experience something real. We need higher influences that are inaccessible when we work alone with our ordinary means. Without the group we cannot come to the necessary intensity. The group is thus a special condition for exchange and a kind of conduit

for higher influences, ideas from a higher level of life. But we must be wholly present. We receive these ideas in the exact measure that we are present.

What then is our responsibility? We have an obligation to exchange, and to accept and help each one to play his role in the group so that consciousness, the measure of our actual awareness, determines everything we do. In becoming conscious of ourselves as a group, we experience the truth of our work. It is not right if I only do what I wish in my own way, independent, unwilling to be tested. This shows I am incapable of confronting myself and of relating to the work of another. It means my work has stopped. If the group does not become conscious of itself as a group, it cannot know its place and obligations in the Work. It cannot serve, cannot play its role in the Work.

The group, the fact that we are together, creates a possibility of consciousness. What we engage,

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## CONTEMPLATIVE RESPONSE TEAM TRAINING

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2017

9 AM-NOON

A three-hour training will be offered for members in our community who desire to participate in contemplative service to the CCH community through prayer, spiritual companioning, and compassionate hospitality.

If you are a Church member with an established Centering Prayer practice of at least two years and feel the interior call of the spirit to participate in an ongoing formation/discernment process, please prayerfully consider attending.

In the training, we will cover topics related to exploring our motivations for helping versus rescuing, listening skills, boundaries, and expressions of suffering.

Role-playing and interactive

teaching techniques will be used frequently to give a more realistic insight into the compassionate, contemplative response to companioning.

The Contemplative Response Team meets one Saturday each month from 9-10:15 a.m. to pray, explore topics of contemplative service and review opportunities for service within our community.

Previous participants have expressed an added value of the CRT training program, that is raising their awareness in how they respond to the needs of others in their life outside of our church community.

There is no fee for the training. More information is available after church on February 5th and February 12th at a table outside the sanctuary.

PLEASE PRE-REGISTER WITH THE OFFICE.

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what we give, is more important than what we wish to take. Each time the possibility is renewed, we have the opportunity to engage our attention and to serve. This possibility is something great that we must strive to maintain. We have to look at it as precious, as sacred.

I am not alone in my work.

When I decide something for myself, I have to feel my belonging to the group. Its life is greater than my own, and it represents something more on the scale of higher Being. ④

Jeanne de Salzmann, *The Reality of Being – The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff*, pages 113-114. 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.

## FEBRUARY CALENDAR

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

### SPECIAL EVENTS

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat  
Feb 11 8:30 am-4:30 pm  
\$15 Bring a potluck dish to share.

CRT Training  
Feb 18 9 am-noon  
see details at left

Enrichment Movie:  
“Meetings with Remarkable Men”  
Feb 19 1 pm

### MONTHLY

1st Sundays  
Bring non-perishables for Caritas

Gurdjieff Music  
Feb 21 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

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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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## ON 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*

∞

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

John 1:16

