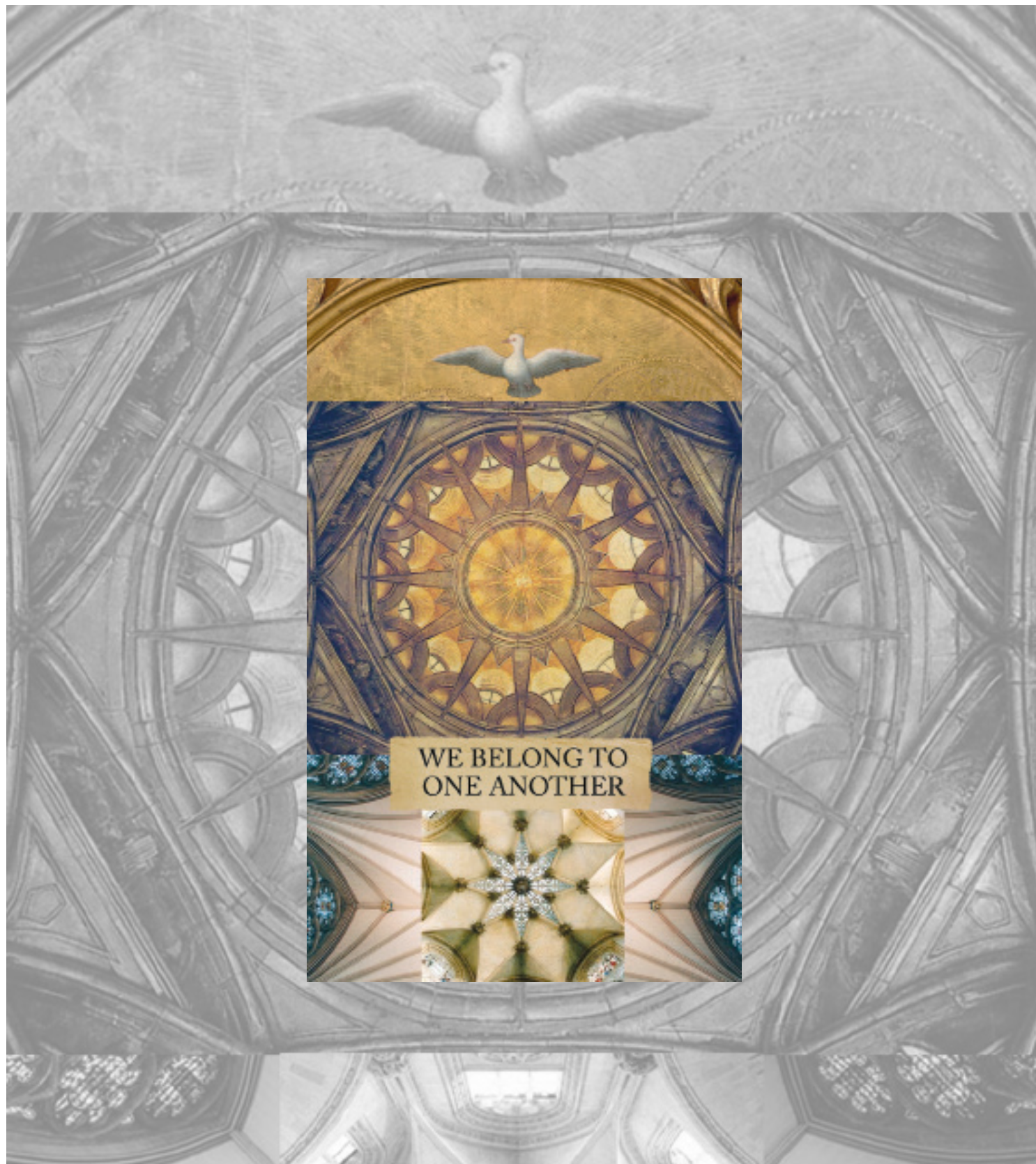


December 2018
Volume 30
Number 12



THE MARK

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



WE BELONG TO
ONE ANOTHER

AN ADVENT VIGIL

BY PETER HAAS

Together, let us keep an Advent vigil—alone in our homes, or with loved ones; in a church sanctuary, or Theosis Chapel. On a plane, or office, or in the woods – wherever you may be at dusk during the month of December, keep vigil. Around the Vesper hour, let us each aim to take rest and be still and notice in the silence, at least for a few minutes, the fading light of the day as it moves from sunset, to twilight, to darkness.

The darkness of December is a sacred time; don't miss it amidst all the electrified lights. Humanity has for millennia, at least in the northern hemisphere, noticed the diminishing light of December and marked its nadir with various ceremonies on or near the Winter Solstice of December 21st. The lighting of bonfires, and now the lighting of our homes with gobs of wired colored lights or blow-up Santa's, was (and is) a way to ward off the night-time fear that the light of the Sun might not return. The fear that the sun might keep descending into the southern horizon – and never rise again.

This is one reason the Feast of Christmas that commemorates the

birth (nativity) of Christ, was chosen to occur on December 25th. It is the first day in the northern hemisphere that the sun appears to “move” back north, following a seeming three day pause of stillness on the horizon. Some call that superstitious; others call it mythic region. Informed by the esoteric side of the Work, we call it a principle: *as it is above, so below*. In other words, the heavens are declaring the Glory of God (Psalm 19), and history embodied that glory in the human person of Jesus, made radiant Son by the Logos/Spirit through Mary.

While all that is significant background information, what I am most interested in for our community this Advent season is our ongoing evolution into and as the Light of Christ. It is for this reason that I invite you to keep Vigil, watching and waiting with the fading light of each December day. Why? In part, this requires a certain stillness and silence to partake in fully; and, the silence and stillness of watching the fading light can serve and support our ongoing consenting to be vessels of the Light of Christ.

Keeping vigil with eyes open, also can become a type of visual *lectio divina*, or even a transformation of the sacred word of Centering Prayer into a sacred glance or image. When you notice you are engaged with your thoughts, just watch the fading light. Return ever so gently to the fading light. That is all that is required. Simply be with the light, and let the light be with you. Notice its slow transition, and shift of colors from bright blue to the oranges and reds of sunset, to the deep purple and violet of twilight, and then the indigo of night. Take the journey of light to night, and perhaps let It take you.

Like Lent, Advent is a season of preparation. Slowing down daily, during the dusk hour is a way of preparing to celebrate the historical birth of Christ in the world. It is also a way of preparing ourselves to become the continuation of the Light of Christ in the world. Of deepening our consent to be transformed into Christ – and to let the Light of Christ heal and integrate every pixel of darkness hidden in our unconscious, afraid

to let go and be called by name into a new life.

At year's end, we mark the "completion" of another sacred journey around the sun. We have been well nourished by Its Energies and Influences. By God's Grace, and our conscious Work, we have, little by little, evolved more as Christ. Such a journey is worthy of pondering and reflecting upon. Give yourself the gift of keeping a month-long vigil at the dusk hour. If not for the month, at least keep a vigil for the Christmas week.

May our vigil crown this year of evolution with the Light of Christ. ☉

INTERCESSORY PRAYER CIRCLE

SUNDAYS 9:15 AM

At CCH, we believe in the power of prayer, under the metaphysical principles that: *what we hold in mind, unfolds in kind and where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also.*

Our wish is to expand the opportunity for wider prayer participation for the community. To that end, everyone is invited to participate on Sundays from 9:15-9:40 a.m. in the Scriptorium classroom. The method of our intercessory prayer circle allows you to join or depart the circle anytime during the prayers, as your schedule allows. Drop-ins are welcome. All are invited.

NEW YEAR'S EVE SERVICE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31ST

Taize Service 8:30-9:30 pm

Centering Prayer & Fellowship* 9:30-11:00 pm

Burning Bowl Ceremony 11:00-11:45 pm

Centering Prayer 11:45 pm-12:15 am

Taize is a universal reconciliation service that extends beyond doctrine, age, social economic status, and understanding to touch our hearts and open our minds. The Taize prayer service consists of meditation, music, song, gospel reading, chants, and prayers conducted around the cross. There will be no lights on in the sanctuary other than candlelight. We will chant by listening to the words.

We will be joining thousands of devoted and hungry souls in a worldwide ceremony to bring the peace of Christ into our lives and into the world. Your full participation is enthusiastically welcomed.

Pre-registration is not needed. *Bring a dish to share.

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.

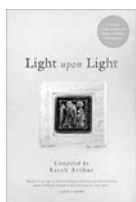
One principle will appear in these pages each month.



GUIDELINE II

In addition to being present in the sacraments, Christ is present in a special manner in every crisis and important event of our lives.

BOOK LOOK



LIGHT UPON LIGHT

Here's literally a novel approach to a daily Advent devotional reader. Sarah Arthur has culled various selections and readings from classic and modern literature and poetry that illustrate the profound, inner and contemplative depths of Advent and Christmas themes. *Light upon Light* is accessible to all readers, and would work well as a daily or weekly family Advent reader.



THE VIGIL

Along with Sarah Arthur's literary resource, Wendy Wright's now out-of-print Advent masterpiece, *The Vigil*, is well worth tracking down in used formats through Amazon or elsewhere.

Wright divides the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany seasons into four sections, she terms: Waiting, Coming, Living, and Keeping. Her writing is fused with a deep elegance and prayerful grace sourced from her own contemplative practice. She has a way of articulating a freshness to the ancient Christmas story – in part because of her inward, Benedictine formation.

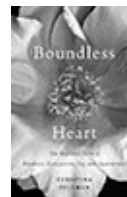
COMMUNITY READING FOR NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

WORLD WITHOUT END BY THOMAS KEATING

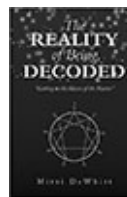
World Without End contains conversations with Fr. Thomas Keating as he looks back on his long life. The discussion includes nature and the cosmos, as well as themes of awakening, true happiness, and the character and purpose of death. The conversation was recorded at St. Benedict's Monastery, along with Abbot Joseph. May this reading nourish our spiritual journey.

CCH BOOKSTORE

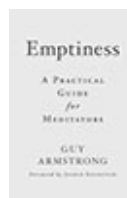
SUGGESTED TITLES FOR DECEMBER
We Belong to One Another



Boundless Heart
The Buddha's Path of Kindness
and Equanimity
by Christina Feldman



Reality of Being Decoded
Getting to the Heart of the Matter
by Mitzi DeWhitt



Emptiness
A Practical Guide for Meditators
by Guy Armstrong



Be Still and Listen
*Experience the Presence of God
in Your Life*
by Amos Smith

BOOKSTORE AND LIBRARY HOURS
Monday-Friday
9:00 am-4:00 pm
Sunday
One half hour before and after service



In Your light, we see light. Psalm 36:10

ANNUAL AIM: EVOLVING AS CHRIST

WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER BY JAMIE FUENTECILLA

A creative vision releases
an enormous amount of energy
and can transform society
beyond our wildest dreams.
Divine empowerment is present.
... The power of the stars
is nothing compared to the energy
of a person whose will has been freed
from the false-self system
and who is thus enabled to co-create
the cosmos together with God.

God's top priority
is the creation of a world
in which the goods of the earth
are equitably distributed,
where no one is forgotten or left out,
and where no one can rest until
everyone has enough to eat,
the oppressed have been liberated,
and justice and peace
are the norm among the nations
and religions of the world.

Until then, even the joy of
transforming union is incomplete.

The commitment
to the spiritual journey
is not a commitment to pure joy,
but to taking responsibility
for the whole human family,
its needs and destiny.

We are not our own;
we belong to everyone else.

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

We are responsible for the future ...
which means nurturing the values that gather us in, bond us together,
create a global consciousness and a cosmic heart.

Ilia Delio, *The Omega Center blog*, August 17, 2017

I Once Was Lost

Early in my life I was expected to be many things including perfect, well-behaved, and emotionally tough. I spent the majority of my life trying to meet these expectations with the assumption that doing so would make me successful and gain the approval of others. Little did I know, however, was this self-created picture of myself—or rather, an idea of who I should be—was nearly impossible to live up to. And yet, thanks to my stubbornness, I continued to strive to meet these impossible standards despite the inevitable consequences. Eventually, I got tired of trying to

emulate this ideal image I created of myself. Overtime it became difficult to not make any mistakes; to avoid social faux pas; and to mask the expression of my true underlying feelings.

I soon began to struggle with intense feelings of personal failure and disappointment. Deep down I felt like an imposter; I was playing a role and playing it very well. So well, in fact, that I lost all sense of who I really was; no longer recognizing my own true feelings and desires. What made matters worse was that I was too afraid to ask for help because it would make me appear less than adequate. I

reached a point where I didn't feel like I had anywhere else to turn. I felt completely and utterly lost.

God Found Me

Growing up my understanding of God was fairly limited. It remained that way for the majority of my adult life. This limited understanding was likely attributed to feelings of rejection. I recall going to church with my friends and witnessing how strong their relationships were with God. They were clearly enraptured and moved by the Spirit. I, however, was not and it wasn't clear to me why. I remember doing everything that my friends were doing: attending church on Sundays, going to Bible study groups, praying and asking God to answer my prayers and open my heart. I wished to feel the way that they were feeling. I wanted to feel God's Love as strongly as they were; yet, all I felt was empty. I eventually doubted that God really loved me and felt neglected. I internalized the situation to mean that there was something wrong with me. This belief was skewed to a point that I judged myself to be unworthy. The pain from this realization was unbearable; hurt led to anger and anger led to action. Slowly, I began to focus my attention away from God.

Pursuing higher education became a priority in my life; the means by which I would avoid rejection and achieve approval. I eventually buried my head in the books and told myself that I didn't need anyone; that I can do this on my own. A wall was built to shut others out; it served as the perfect defense mechanism to avoid getting too close. My relationships with other people were surface level. It was easier to be there for others, but harder to expect them to be there for me.

It wasn't until I was introduced to the Church of Conscious Harmony when my heart began to open and I could feel again. I was immediately drawn to how genuine and accepting everyone was. They welcomed me (faults and all) and expressed their sincere love. I felt safe and comfortable; somehow, I knew that my heart would be taken care of. My guard fell down and I was willing to be vulnerable. In the loving embrace of my friends, I was given permission to be weak; to let go; to surrender. I was home.

With my heart open wide, I was able to experience my first spiritual awakening. Around the time when my husband and I were considering having children, I often wondered what it would be like to be a mother. One particular evening, I was

reminiscing about my mother and how much she loves me; knowing that she would do anything in the world to comfort me and make me happy. Like my mother, I knew that I would feel and do the same for my child. I was deep in thought about this when this scripture suddenly came to mind, *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16)

I paused for a long moment. Stunned, in fact, because it was nearly impossible for me to fathom the indescribable pain of losing a child. Just the thought of this brought me to my knees in anguish. After many long seconds passed, I began to question whether God loved me enough to sacrifice his one and only Son. Impossible. There is no way that this could be true. In the midst of disbelief, everything stilled. Then what seemed to come out of nowhere was this transcendent feeling of peace and joy that pervaded every cell in my body from the top of my head to the tip of my toes. While consumed with this feeling, I slowly looked up and repeated, not with question but with conviction, "God loves me so much that he sacrificed his one and only Son." I was completely overwhelmed; the breath knocked

out of me. In this moment God revealed to me a love so great; a love much greater than the love one would have for their own child. Time slowed to a stop. This is when God found me.

It was this experience that solidified my commitment to making God the center of my life. Since having had this experience, I've become devoted to the spiritual journey and only wish to live God's Will for me; to return the Love that has been given. *Love one another as I have loved you.* (John 15:12)

My Spiritual Journey

While on the spiritual journey, I have realized that God has always been with me and never abandoned me. *It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.* (Deuteronomy 31:8) God is holding my hand and my heart through this process. It is also clear that God is within me. When I was lost, I was looking in all directions outside of myself to find happiness. But now that I'm found, I'm looking in new directions. This scripture from Luke helps me remember: *The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.* (Luke 17: 20-21)

In committing to a daily practice of Centering Prayer and the Work of Inner Christianity, I am experiencing Silence and deepening the understanding of my inner life. As such, there is an uncovering of the unconscious conditioning to reveal the heart of Christ. When observing the feeling of fear or anxiety while talking in front of a group of people or sharing information about my personal life, Work principles are applied to separate from my false-self. The Work teaches that all thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs are not my own, but borrowed from somewhere else ready-made; that I am no-thing.


With this knowledge comes a deeper understanding around the conditioned beliefs that it's okay or not okay to behave the way I'm behaving, or feel the way I am feeling. Consequently, by labeling the reactions: "this is called feeling insecure," and "this is 'it' doing what it does," it's easier to non-identify and affirm that this is not my "self." This provides the space to give up my desire for approval and to remember that I am a child of God; that I am loved; that *I am* love. And so are you! Through this process of self-observation, non-identification, and self-remembering, this false-

self is unraveling, allowing more and more growth into Christ.

Evolving as Christ

Through Christ, I am rediscovering my relationship with God. Fr. Thomas Keating explains our intimacy with God as *Abba* by stating, "God's relationship to us is characterized by immense and continuous concern, care and tenderness, and by an all-inclusive forgiveness that extends to everything in our lives, from the moment of conception until our death." As Christ, I am understanding God's Love, which extends outwards (in all directions) and sees beyond all differences. We are all part of each other. There is no separation. We are One. There is only One.

May we all be enraptured by God and moved by the Spirit within and beyond:

"Come Holy Spirit Come. Come and set our hearts ablaze with your love, light, and life, that we may more fully and selflessly love you and your creation. For the praise and glory of your name, for the evolution of Christ in these beings, on this earth, and in the cosmos, and so our joy may be complete. Amen." (2017 CCH prayer card) 

A YEAR IN REVIEW: EVOLVING AS CHRIST

In 2018, we were invited to join in community
to move ever deeper together in the annual aim of "Evolving as Christ."

Our intention has been to move to a higher knowledge,
understanding and relationship with God.

*Evolution has now opened us to stages of divine union and unconditional love
... with the spiritual perception of God's presence in all our senses, thinking, and
especially in our relationship to other people. ... the human species
has a oneness that transcends all differences and that, in some way,
we really are everybody else as well as ourselves.*

Thomas Keating, *God is Love: The Heart of All Creation*

JANUARY	NEW BEGINNINGS
FEBRUARY	WELCOMING THE UNKNOWN
MARCH	PILGRIMAGE
APRIL	SEEDS OF NEW LIFE
MAY	LIVING INWARD, MOVING OUTWARD
JUNE	A GROWING FAITH
JULY	THE HEART OF MATTER
AUGUST	AFFIRMATION OF LIFE
SEPTEMBER	CONTEMPLATIVE SERVICE
OCTOBER	WHOLE-MAKING
NOVEMBER	THE NEW CREATION
DECEMBER	WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER

We are members of one another. Ephesians 4:25

Previous issues of *The Mark* are available at
<http://consciousharmony.org/read-listen/the-mark/>
if you would like to review and reflect on these monthly community aims.

Each issue is dedicated to the monthly topic.
May you continue to go ever deeper in your journey
evolving as Christ everywhere and in everything.



THE CHURCH of CONSCIOUS HARMONY A CONTEMPLATIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

THE SUN'S ROLE IN OUR INNER EVOLUTION INTO LIGHT


Work Idea: The Sun's role in the Ray of Creation, feeding planet earth and humankind with an energy that makes all cellular development possible. Also, the Sun is a symbol and source for the further possibility of conscious development on planet earth, beyond just physical evolution.

Work Source: Rodney Collin's extraordinary book, *The Theory of Celestial Influence* provides an expanded teaching on the Ray of Creation, and especially the role of the sun's role in our inner evolution into light. The following selection is taken from page 88, after Collin's detailed development of the nature of the sun and its creation of light for planet earth and human being in Chapters Four and Five: "The energy incorporated into physical bodies, when the latter die, *becomes light again*. If we remember the conclusion we just came to about the nature of light,

we can even say that, physical bodies disintegrating, their matter returns to the divine state. Only the proof of this thesis is hampered by the fact that normally we can only conceive of consciousness attached to physical bodies, or to matter in cellular state. And it could only be established satisfactorily by the actual carrying over of consciousness into matter in electronic state. The whole question may then be put like this: Is this matter in its return to the divine state accompanied by individual consciousness? Who possesses an individual consciousness sufficiently permanent and sufficiently intense to take advantage of this infinite expansion of its vehicle? About such possibilities little is ordinarily known."

Practical Application: Therefore, Revelation is necessary. In particular, the Revelation of this possibility in and through Christ, Light of the World, Son of God, the

firstborn among many brothers and sisters (Romans 8.29). During this Advent and Christmas season, let's seek to interpret the ancient stories of Jesus' birth deeper than just a special child born for the "salvation of all people." Ask Spirit to take you deeper into the well-loved and well-known carols and scriptures. Christ and Christmas are more than just spiritual sentimentality. Christ is the Way it can go for each of us. Thus, keep daily vigil at dusk to experientially feel into how you too are evolving as Christ in the stillness, silence and dimming light of December.

Supplemental Resources: Watch the approximately five minute National Geographic video "Sun 101" available at [video.nationalgeographic.com/video/101-videos/00000160-be06-d79c-a3ff-fff691a50000](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/video/101-videos/00000160-be06-d79c-a3ff-fff691a50000) 

For more 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.

THE REAL CHRIST:
HONORING & EXPLORING THE WITNESS & WRITINGS
OF BERNADETTE ROBERTS

2019 JANUARY ENRICHMENT WEEKEND
SATURDAY, JANUARY 12 AND SUNDAY, JANUARY 13

Register online at www.ConsciousHarmony.org for this historic gathering at The Church of Conscious Harmony. We aim to learn from three of Bernadette Robert's primary students and friends. Our guest teachers will share with us their understanding of Bernadette's teaching of the Spiritual Journey, The Trinity, Christ, Eucharist, and their personal stories of how God used Bernadette's friendship, teachings and writings in their lives. The cost is \$50 per person.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 2019

- 8:30 am Check-In and Coffee Fellowship in Fellowship Hall
- 9:00 am Welcome, Centering Prayer & Introductions
- 9:30 am Panel Discussion A: *The Spiritual Journey*
- Noon Lunch Break (brown bag or on your own)
- 1:00 pm Welcome, Prayer & Readings
- 1:15 pm Panel Discussion B:
The Real Christ: Oneness, Trinity & Eucharist
- 2:15 pm Break
- 2:30 pm Panel Discussion B, continued
- 3:30 pm Q&A
- 4:00 pm Closing Prayer

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13, 2019

- 1:00 pm Welcome, Centering Prayer & Introductions
- 1:30 pm Panel Discussion C: *How the Writings and Experiences with Bernadette have been Occasions for God's Grace in Your Life.*
- 3:30 pm Q&A
- 4:00 pm Closing Prayer

THE LIGHTS
OF CHRIST
ADVENT & CHRISTMAS
SERMON THEMES

December 2
Waiting for the Light
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

December 9
Preparing for the Light
Luke 3:1-6

December 16
Fire Light
Luke 3:7-18

December 23
You Are the Light
Luke 1:39-45

December 24
Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service
Night Light
Luke 2:1-20

December 30
Heart Light
Colossians 3:12-17

December 31
New Year's Eve
Taizé Service
New Light
John 1:1-18

2019 CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS

CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS AT THE CHURCH OF CONSCIOUS HARMONY

Jan 26	9:00 am-4:30 pm
Feb 16	9:00 am-4:30 pm
Mar 9	9:00 am-4:30 pm
Mar 10-11*	Sun 8:00 am-4:00 pm & Mon 8:30 am-4:00 pm
Mar 16	United in Prayer Day†
Apr 20	9:00 am-12:30 pm
May 17-18	Fri 8:30 am-4:00 pm & Sat 8:30 am-4:00 pm
June 15	9:00 am-4:30 pm
July 13	1:00 pm-5:00 pm
Aug 10-11	Sat 8:30 am-4:00 pm & Sun 8:00 am-4:00 pm
Sept 21	9:00 am-4:30 pm
Oct 19	9:00 am-4:30 pm
Nov 16	9:00 am-4:30 pm
Dec 14	1:00 pm-5:00 pm

Half-day ~ \$10 love offering

One-day ~ \$20 love offering (Please bring your own lunch)

Two-day commuter retreat \$100 (sleep at home; meals included)

* Can be combined with the Saturday 1-day retreat, for a 3-day retreat experience.

†Held at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary from 8:30 am-3:00 pm.

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

Jan 18-22	5-day Renewal	\$495
Mar 29-Apr 7	10-day Lenten	\$895
July 26-31	6-day	\$595
Sep 13-18	6-day	\$595
Dec 6-12	7-day Advent	\$695

Double room prices. Single rooms are an additional \$10/night.

Contact the office for further information and registration.

DECEMBER CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Dec 15 9:00 am-12:30 pm
Pre-register in office or on website. \$10

The Glorious Impossible Christmas Program
Dec 20 7:00 pm
Please join us for a joy-filled experience.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Dec 24 6:00-7:00 pm

Office and Bookstore Closed
Dec 24-28

New Year's Eve Service
Dec 31 8:30 pm-12:15 am
see details on page 3

MONTHLY

1st Sundays
Bring non-perishables for Caritas

WEEKLY

Sundays
Lectio Divina 8:00-9:00 am
Prayer Circle 9:15-9:45 am
Worship Service 10:00-11:30 am
Youth Program 10:00-11:30 am
Fellowship 11:30 am

Wednesdays
Contemplative Lunch noon-1:00 pm
Contemplative Communion Service 6:00-7:00 pm

Thursdays 7:30-9:00 pm
Work of Inner Christianity Class

Saturdays
Scriptorium noon-12:50 pm

DAILY
Sunday-Saturday 7:00-7:35 am
Centering Prayer Service in Theosis Chapel

Recordings of services are available
through the Bookstore and online at
www.consciousharmony.org



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ADVENT



The Eastern Christian tradition sees the Advent season as a time of waiting for the light that will first shine forth at Christmas and reach its peak on Epiphany, the Feast of Lights.

This beautiful text of Isaiah is proclaimed during the Liturgy of the season:

*Rise up in splendor! Your light has come,
the glory of the Lord shines upon you . . .
Upon you the Lord shines,
and over you appears His glory.*

Isaiah 60:1-2

On the feast of Christmas,
the joyful expectancy exemplified
by the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist and Isaiah
– and shared by us in the Advent liturgy –
comes to fulfillment.

Christ is born anew in our hearts . . .
and our incorporation in Him
as members of His mystical body
is the light that empowers us to follow Him
and to be transformed into Him.

*Advent & The Octave of Christmas,
A Journey into Faith with Father Thomas Keating*

