



# A New Way of Being Together

by Peter Haas

A Story: In Verona, Italy, at Juliet's balcony overlooking the courtyard of the Capulet home, where Juliet looked down upon her beloved Romeo, it appears that the famous balcony said to have inspired Shakespeare's story, was fashioned from a re-purposed burial sarcophagus, a stone casket like structure. The balcony is a not-so subtle portrait of the paired power of love and death. Also, in that city of love, sits a former Roman coliseum - cite of untold violence and bloodshed. In subsequent centuries, the coliseum was transformed into the famed Verona opera house. These two visual vignettes from Verona remind us that on this planet, life, tragedy, love, death and drama are inseparably paired. The question for us is how cultivating skillfulness in spiritual practice can serve the evolution of human consciousness - or new ways of being and doing that can support the transformation of human drama and death into thresholds that gracefully graduate

us toward new ways of being, not just recurring circles of separation, sorrow and suffering.

A Teaching: We are human. It is of our nature to grow and it is of our nature to die. It is of our nature to experience bliss and joy, and it is of our nature to experience pain and grief. We are human. Our nature is human; that is all we are supposed to be here on planet earth. To acknowledge this, is freedom. To embrace this fully, is a big part of each of our journeys on this planet.

We are not asked to be divine. We are not asked to be superhuman. Nor are we asked or encouraged to be *less than* human. We are asked to develop new ways of being human following the template of the Way of Jesus. We are invited to be human in more fully loving, conscious and just ways. We are invited to offer our human nature to God so that we can also become more fully embodied partakers of the divine nature as humans *now*, not just in some faraway heaven (2 Peter 1.4). This union of natures does not make us less human; it completes our humanity, crowns our humanity, and calls our humanity to attend to something more than just its base instincts and programs for happiness and pleasure.

So, take a moment and ask yourself: what does a new way of being human look like for you? Perhaps it looks like cultivating wisdom? Or working on increasing your patience so that you are less reactive. Or perhaps it looks like making physical efforts to support your body's health. Changing how you eat or taking care to get more sleep. Perhaps it looks like acknowledging the vast social injustices occurring just down the road or on the other side of our planet. Attending to our human development can't just be about yours or mine. Isn't it also about ours? I, Me, Mine, Yours, ultimately are called to graduate into We and Ours.

Attending to Our human development is a life long journey

that is woven together with Our spiritual development. To be human is to be spiritual. To be spiritual is to be human. The question is how will you be human? And, in this era of polarization, who will we cultivate being human with together? People who look, act and believe like us? Or, can we choose a way of being together that more completely expresses the full array of the human family, intentionally inclusive and consciously representative?

An Illustration: The phrase "April showers bring May flowers" speaks to the slow processes of germination, growth and flowering. Perhaps that is one reason May is the season of graduations. Graduations remind us that there are distinct markers of growth and development; pauses on the journey, that help us celebrate and look back upon the passages we have traveled and ponder what future possibilities might be awaiting us. Life is full of little moments of graduations. Thresholds that gracefully graduate us toward new ways of being, we notice that a long standing addictive behavior no longer has power over us. We see that we no longer perceive someone in a judgmental way. We experience a greater capacity for patience with someone we had been reactive toward. We cultivate a new friendship with someone who is not in our cultural circle of comfort.

These kinds of graduations into new and different ways of being are usually not ends in themselves but celebrations on our unfolding journey that we are maturing into the "full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4.13). Poet John O'Donohue vividly conveys this with a prayer: "May all that is unforgiven in you be released. May your fears yield their deepest tranquilities. May all that is unlived in you blossom into a future graced with love." Similarly, beloved Buddhist teacher and author Thich Nhat Hanh, puts a fine point to the invitation: "Instead of blaming others, we can look at our own being and work on whatever unskillfulness on our part may have contributed to our difficulty with another." This invitation also points us toward an application.

An Application: Let's think about how cultivating skillfulness is a part of the process of our own development of new ways of being human. Skillfulness is another way of talking about why we do the Work of Inner Christianity. Skillfulness is how we can love our enemies. Skillfulness is how we can pray unceasingly. Skillfulness is how we can turn the other cheek or forgive seventy times seven. Skillfulness is how we become a Christian.

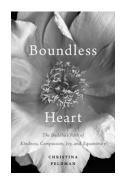
How are you cultivating your own set of skills that participate in the process of moving you toward graduation in a specific area of your life? Without Work, without skillful action, nothing changes, little grows, development stagnates. Cultivating skillfulness is what the ideas of the Work of

#### continued from page 3

Inner Christianity do. As we take these ideas into our life, try them on, play with them in our dayto-day interactions with others, share with others in our Journey Groups how the ideas are working in us, we will be amazed to see the impact the ideas have on our doing and being – literally infusing us with new ways of being human together, graduating us free from the sarcophaguses of separation, fear, recurrence and the drama of division and despair.

**A Summary:** At this moment, though your life may feel that it is moving slowly, we are *all* moving on a planet rotating around the sun at 772.9 miles per hour. Perspective is important. Is your life a sarcophagus, or a balcony of encounter with your fellow human Beloveds as an opportunity to become love? Is your lifetime a coliseum full of battles and divisions, or a stage for the singing of your songs? Is your life entombed by what has been done and left undone, or is it a new moment to welcome new showers of skillfulness that resource new thoughts, feelings and actions, which together, germinate a consciously contemplative community flourishing with all God's flowers?

# Community Reading May-June



Boundless Heart: The Buddha's Path of Kindness, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity by Christina Feldman

*Boundless Heart* provides insight, tools and practices for liberating our lives and awakening our hearts. These teachings on the Four Immeasurables –

Kindness, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity – are a gift for us to deepen our level of being, connect with our true essence, and become more aware of the interconnection we have with other beings. When we pursue these four gifts sincerely as spiritual practice, they work together, complementing and enhancing each other, leading us to an awakening that compels us to share with others.

Feldman writes in the introduction,

"There is no greater love than the immeasurable friendliness that can embrace all beings, all events, and all experiences with unshakeable kindness. There is no compassion greater than the fearless heart that can turn toward suffering and pain, tremble with empathy, and live with the commitment to end the causes of anguish. There is no greater happiness than inwardly generated joy and peace. There is no equanimity more unshakeable than the profound poise of the liberated heart that can meet the world of ungraspable conditions and events without being shattered.

Threaded through the entirety of the Buddha's pathway of awakening are the teachings on cultivating the boundless heart – immeasurable kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. These qualities are referred to as the brahma viharas. Brahma refers to the sublime or noble tenor of these qualities; vihara originally comes from the word for "monastery," or the place we abide and make our home. We are encouraged, whether standing or walking, sitting or lying down, whenever we are awake to make kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity the home of our heart. This is the noblest way of living in this world here and now."

# BOOK LOOK THE NEW PERSON



A classic resource in the journey of transformation and development is Maurice Nicoll's *The New Man: An Interpretation of Some Parables and Miracles of Christ.* If you have not yet read this spiritual classic, give yourself the treat of doing so soon. *The New Man* deepens themes that his *Commentaries* develop. It's as if these essays functioned as the

"drafting table" for many of Nicoll's talks recorded in the *Commentaries. The New Man* isn't so much a how-to book on transformation, but rather a resource book that helps us think in new ways, particularly as it relates to key stories in the Gospels.

For example, Nicoll's illuminating teaching on the story of transforming water into wine, his teaching on *The Lord's Prayer*, and the unparalleled insights offered about *The Sermon on The Mount*. Here's a brief excerpt from Nicoll's essay on *The Marriage at Cana*: "Knowledge should always lead to understanding and that an understanding is only possible with a corresponding development of being. This is the deepest idea concerning human psychology for then a union takes place that leads to inner evolution. In this marriage or union, the meaning of knowledge unites with the being of the person and leads to one's inner development. This is what the Parable of Water made into Wine is about ..."



Related to Nicoll's *The New Man*, is the brief yet genius summary by P.D. Ouspensky, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution*. Both books help provide a foundational understanding on the possibilities the Work of Inner Christianity is offering humanity. They stand as timeless classics for the enduring conundrum of how to be human with others here on planet earth.

## 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 appears in these pages each month.

#### Guideline 16

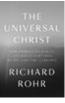
Divine love is compassionate, tender, luminous, totally self-giving, seeking no reward, unifying everything.

## CCH BOOKSTORE

### Suggested Titles for $\operatorname{May}$



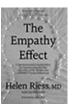
Spirit of Fire The Life and Vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin by Ursula King



The Universal Christ How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For, and Believe by Richard Rohr



The Way to Love The Last Meditations of Anthony de Mello by Anthony de Mello



*The Empathy Effect* Seven Neuroscience-Based Keys for Transformation by Helen Riess, M.D.

Bookstore and Library Hours Open Monday-Friday 9 am-4 pm Sunday 9:30-10 am & 11:30 am-noon



Whoever is in Christ is a new creation ...

behold, new things have come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

# Annual Aim: A New Creation

The Old Man and The New Man  $\,$  by Joe Fuentecilla

The old and the new.

For the "old man," everything is old: he has seen everything or thinks he has. He has lost hope in anything new. What pleases him is the "old" he clings to, fearing to lose it, but he is certainly not happy with it. And so he keeps himself "old" and cannot change; he is not open to any newness.

For the "new man" everything is new. Even the old is transfigured in the Holy Spirit and is always new. There is nothing to cling to; there is nothing to be hoped for in what is already past. ... The new man is he who can find reality where it cannot be seen by the eyes of the flesh – where it is not yet – where it comes into being the moment he sees it. ... The new man lives in a world that is always being created, and renewed. He lives in this realm of renewal and creation. He lives in life.

Thomas Merton, Journals, March 18, 1959

#### The Good Shepherd

There was a time when I was lost. The impact of the world around me had an energy so intense, it engulfed me and became a part of my personality. As I look back on my life, specifically when I was in my early twenties, playing poker and going to parties was all I lived for. One night I remember gambling at the casino for over five-hours. It was a good day "at the office." Towards the end of my shift, the sum of my bankroll totaled more than I arrived with. So, I decided to leave. After leaving the casino, I drove up to a Taco Bell around 12:30 a.m. for a late-night snack. As I pulled up to the intercom to place an order, a cold piece of steel touched the side of my face. Instantly, I realized that it was a gun pressing against my left cheek. Suddenly, I heard a voice giving me commands, "turn off your car, throw the keys out of the window, give me your wallet, I swear I'll shoot you!" My focus was to stay calm and breathe slowly. My cooperation was key to survival. I complied with all the requests with calmness. Moments later, a voice inside me called out to Jesus, asking, "Lord, are you real? Please show me!" At that moment, the empty passenger seat to my right filled with a peaceful energy that made the hair on my right arm stand up. Immediately, the gun was lifted, and all that remained was the presence of Christ, with me. As I sat there shaking and wondering how I got myself in this situation, a scripture came to my aid, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6). At that moment, I realized I wasn't acknowledging God, but rather, I was trying to direct my own paths.

An awakening had occurred accompanied by a divine presence. The experience revealed that this path of gambling leads to a dead end. Back then I would pray, "Why is this happening to me God?" But today, instead of asking why, I pray, "thank you for showing me where not to go, thank you for saving my life, and thank you for directing my paths." John 10:27 reads, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* Ever since then or when in trials, I hear my shepherd's voice.

### Fatherless

Despite not having a biological father around when I was young, I was led to believe that God in heaven was my father. I didn't understand what a father was. It wasn't until I reached elementary school when I became aware of my friends' fathers. For example, I would see a male figure involved with my friends, i.e. shooting basketball, playing catch, providing lunch money. I was confused because I did not have this type of relationship. I began to wonder where my dad was. I longed for him. In these moments, I felt alone.

One day during lunch, my best friend's father came to school in his police car and was dressed in his police uniform. My friend and I immediately rushed to him. He showed us the police car then sat us on his lap and asked, "What do you boys want to be when you grow up?" We screamed, "A policeman like you!" For the first time, I felt what it was like to have a father. I even recall asking him if I can go home with them. Then I realized that this wasn't possible. Justifications that I held onto included: one day my real father would come home with a collection of birthday gifts from all the years missed and maybe he was on a long business trip. After waiting years for his return, I let go of the hope and began to accept the fatherless card that life had dealt me. I no longer looked for a father to guide me, but turned to the streets for guidance. While out wondering, I found many teachers. I learned to be open to listening to anyone that was willing to share their knowledge. Everyone that I came into contact with knew something that I didn't know, which later became useful.

#### Light On

In the past, I sought after external pleasures such as gambling, drugs and alcohol to help numb the negative emotions such as the pain of not having a father, the anxiety of not having enough money, and the fear of being killed when out on the streets. The path that I am on now, however, is a path of healinginstead of wanting to numb or ignore arising negative emotions, I long to feel and integrate them. "In order to change it is necessary to make centers work in a new way." (Maurice Nicoll, Psychological Commentaries, p. 99)

Truly, trials and tribulations are blessings ready to bloom like flowers in springtime. Yes, times were tough growing up, but the struggle was required for my growth. The beauty of God's timing is perfect. "Patience is the Mother of Will." (*Commentaries*, p. 482) Now that I am armed with the tools of The Work of Inner Christianity and Centering Prayer, I approach a struggle with open arms like Christ on the cross. "Welcome, welcome, welcome. I welcome everything that comes to me today because I know it's for my healing." (The Welcoming Prayer)

### **Begin Again**

My wish is to be free from negative associations that are tied to fear and pain. To not be triggered by the fact that I've never had a father. The more I practice, the closer I get to the new man I wish to be. Fr. Thomas Keating said, "God doesn't care what you did a minute ago."The moment that I remember this, the past doesn't affect me. Now instead of thinking critically about my father's absence, I ask myself this Work idea, "What is the gift in this for me?" At the moment; seeing Christ in everyone and everything helps me notice God more. Today, I thank God when things do not go my way, because spiritual blessings come wrapped in trials. The fog on the window I view life through is being cleaned. Another Work idea: things are happening the only way they can.

Moreover, as a new man, my perception about people and life has been made new. Acceptance of myself and where I am in the cosmos, has shown me how to accept others and where they are on their journey. When I look to the night sky, the connection I feel to the furthest star in the galaxy is felt in the inner-most chamber of my heart. All that I have been searching for has been found, buried deep inside my being. The everlasting supply of all my needs has been accessible all this time. I only forgot. My interpretation of the word "repent" has transformed from "repent or you're going to hell!" to a gentle "turn around, you're going the wrong way."

A couple of years ago, while on retreat in Belton, Texas at Cedarbrake, Barbara Cook assigned me to turn off all of the lights in the main building once it emptied. Respectfully, I accepted the invitation. When the time came to turn off all the lights, a feeling of fear arose within me as I stood in the darkness. The time to "Work" was at hand. First, a selfobservation was made. My entire body began to tighten, specifically in the emotional center. Second, non-identification helped me label the feeling. It was fear. I stood there in darkness, paralyzed, shaking and scared. Then, with effort, I focused to self-remember, "I am a child of God." The fear of the dark began to separate from me. Yet, fear was not completely gone. Immediately, this affirmation came to mind, "It is not true; I am not afraid; I am perfect love and can know no fear. No one, nothing in the universe, can hurt me." (H. Emile Cady, *Lessons in Truth*, p. 54) To my surprise, practicing the Work and remembering this affirmation gave me the courage to look fear dead in the eyes. At that moment, I realized that fear is not real.

The new-found knowledge of the word "repent," has given me a better sense of direction. A profound turning point has occurred in my life that revealed a new path. I wonder, "What do I do now?" In Philippians 1:6, it reads; *being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will continue to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.* Delightfully, I proceed to enjoy every encounter shared with our Maker. He is the potter and I am the clay.

### Old vs. New

For the old Joe, happiness existed in external pleasures: buying new clothes, shoes, and watches on a regular basis. Putting hope in his possessions gave him confidence. The fear of losing things drove him to want more. He clung to his possessions. He thought he knew everything. Working only for himself. He lost hope in anything new and clung to his old ways.

The new Joe believes that happiness can be accessed by being present in the moment. The fear of losing things is gone because he has learned to let go little by little. Since giving my consent to the Holy Spirit everything seems new, especially my emotions, thoughts, and physical feelings. My hope is that Centering Prayer and the Work will transform me into a healthier human being. This new man "knows nothing." He Works for the entire human species. Hope has been found. Still I wonder, "Who am I? You are awareness and expression in the moment." This Bernadette Roberts saying gives me hope that one day I will cling to nothing.

As I create a future memory, I see a patient man willing to listen. My spiritual practice has been pivotal as an aid in my healing. I practice not only for myself, but for the human race, past and present. God loves me, and that is all I need to know.

## May Sermon Themes

- May 5 Reset Me John 21.1-19 May 12 Listen to Me John 10.22-30
- May 19 Reveal Me John 13.31-35
- May 26 Guest Speaker Phileena Heuertz

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

# LIVING THE WORK OF INNER Christianity in Daily Life

A New Feeling of I

**Work Idea:** Our feeling of I exerts an untold power over us. There is wisdom and freedom available when we ask such questions to our self: What "I" feels this feeling? What "I" thinks this thought? What "I" senses this sensation? In part, the Work is about observing and learning how and when we place our feeling of I into a feeling, thought, attitude, mood, expression, or action. Observing our feeling of I is related to the development of Essence.

Work Source: There are many helpful commentaries on Essence in Maurice Nicoll's teachings. One in particular connects with the idea of inner change: "Now a person cannot change, cannot undergo pyschotransformism, unless one's mind changes, and one's mind cannot change unless the Universe changes for one, and unless one's feeling of I changes

... To have the same thoughts and the same views of the world and the same feeling of I as you always had means that you are just the same as you always were ... If you change, the Universe will change and your feeling of I will change." (*Commentaries*, Vol. 5, 1564).

**Practical Application:** This month, Work on observing and changing a feeling of I you have grown accustomed to. For example, perhaps your feeling of I is closely related to being treated a certain way. Or, perhaps your feeling of I is wrapped up with a political view or ideology. Who would you be without all that energy going into that particular feeling of I? How would you treat others if your feeling of I was different? And finally, Work on feeling and understanding where other's feeling of I is occurring, and practice empathy – what the Work calls, external considering.

**Supplemental Recent Resources:** See the writings of Joseph Dizpenza, *Evolve Your Brain* or *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself*. Similarly, the writings of Antonio Damasio are exceptional, especially his book *The Feeling of What Happens*.



A CONTEMPLATIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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### The Holy Sacrament of Baptism

Brother and sisters: We are indeed buried with Him through Baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with Him through a death like His, we shall also be united with Him in the Resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with Him ... Then, we have died with Christ and we shall also live with Him. Romans 6: 4-6, 8

Baptism is done to us. It is the sheer gift of God. Eternal life begins in us. We are the sons and daughters of God, incorporated into Christ's body. His spirit dwells in us. All our sins are forgiven. The darkness of our ignorance and weakness of our will are being healed. And if anything is lacking to us, Christ, who is interceding for us at the right hand of the Father, will give us that too. Christ is ours by Baptism. It only remains for us to become what we are and to enjoy what we possess. Thomas Keating, *Awakenings* 

> Baptism will be celebrated on Sunday afternoon June 2. Adult Preparatory classes: Five Saturdays, 9-10:30 am, beginning May 4. Please register with the office.

(Youth Communion & Baptism Classes began April 28 for six Sundays during worship)

## HYPED Spaghetti Luncheon & Fundraiser

Harmony Youth Practicing Evolving Devotion, the HYPED group, is fundraising for their annual pilgrimage to The Lama Foundation this June. You're invited to support their annual fundraiser (featuring lunch with gluten-free options, music by our teens, and a silent auction) at CCH on May 26 after the Sunday service. Luncheon tickets are sold in advance and can be purchased at the event.

To make a donation for the silent auction, please contact the office by May 19. For more information about our Youth Programs, please visit www.consciousharmony.org/offerings/youth.

## UPCOMING CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS

Half-, One-, Two-Day at The Church of Conscious Harmony

May 17-18	Fri & Sat 8:30 am-4 pm	\$100
June 15	9 am-4:00 pm	\$20
July 13	1-5 pm	\$10
Aug 10-11	Sat 8:30 am-4 pm &	
-	Sun 8 am-4 pm	\$100
Sept 21	9am-4:00pm	\$20

One-day – please bring your own lunch. Two-day commuter retreat – sleep at home; meals included. Cost is a suggested love offering. Scholarships are available as needed.

### Multi-Day, Overnight at Cedarbrake Retreat & Renewal Center

July 26-31	6-day	\$595
Sep 13-18	6-day	\$595
Dec 6-12	7-day	\$695

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

Please contact the CCH office or website to register.

### MAY CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org for a complete listing of events

#### SPECIAL EVENTS

Adult Baptism classes 5 Saturdays, 9-10:30am, begins May 4 Preregister with the office.

Two-Day Commuter Retreat May 17-18 8am-4pm \$100 Preregister online or with office.

HYPED Spaghetti Luncheon & Fundraiser May 26 11:45am-1:30pm (See left)

#### MONTHLY

1st Sundays Bring non-perishables for Caritas

#### WEEKLY

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

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

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

Fridays Yin Yoga 1-2:15pm \$15 Preregister: AwakenedHeartAustin@gmail.com

Saturdays Scriptorium noon-12:50pm

DAILY

Sunday-Saturday 7-7:35am Centering Prayer Service, Theosis Chapel

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



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



The cosmic Christ, revealed in the mystery of the Ascension, manifests our deep self and the inner nature of all reality. What is manifested is the living, vibrant Spirit, filling us and all things with boundless life and love. The Spirit is always present, yet always coming to us. That is because the divine actuality becomes present in a new way each time we move to a new level of spiritual awareness. The Spirit has been given; yet He is always waiting to be received so that He can give Himself again – and more completely. The Grace of the Ascension

He told them, 'You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses ... even to the ends of the world. These were His last words. As they watched, He was taken up and disappeared in a cloud. The Acts of the Apostles 1:7-9

> I'll be with you ... day after day after day, right up to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20



Thomas Keating, The Heart of the World