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THE MARK

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LIFE AS TEACHER

TIME: A RELENTLESS TEACHER

BY PETER HAAS

In Lewis Carroll's classic tale *Alice in Wonderland*, the Red Queen remembers the future instead of the past. It turns out that what seems nonsensical is actually very wise, just not *yet* understood or experienced. Similarly, 20th century psychologist and esoteric Christian teacher Maurice Nicoll, who was a student of Carl Jung, G.I. Gurdjieff and Peter Ouspensky, also articulated the important role of remembering the future. Nicoll, developing the ideas of Ouspensky, calls this quality of remembering the future, sending oneself a "future memory."

English poet T.S. Eliot, a contemporary fellow Englishman of Nicoll, begins his famous poem *Burnt Norton* with the perplexing possibility that "time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future. And time future contained in time past." *Burnt Norton* is often remembered for the poignant last line of the fourth stanza, which comes after the silence and stillness following

a movement of striving, a silence where we find:

"the still point of the turning world."

The still point of the turning world and time, such as what arises deep in meditation, must surely be a place where we can use the present to remember both the past and the future. In a certain sense, remembering is our purposeful evolution of the seeming tyranny of time.

Remembering past and future is a form of prayer. Remembering is paired with memory, will and imagination....

Who do you wish to be?

How do you wish to evolve, grow and be transformed this year?

Can you feel your future self now?

What do you wish to tell your future self now?

What would your future self wish to tell you now?

Time and our experience of time, both in the moment and in our memories, is a significant

dimension in life. Using conscious states of awareness that arise through meditation practices such as Centering Prayer or Tara Brach's RAIN Method. The RAIN method is one of the most simple and effective methods of helping us be present to what is occurring in our life and provides a simple tool of self-observation to help us remember our future and lead us to that still point. Here's the RAIN method in summary form:

R: Recognize what is going on inside

A: Allow what is happening by breathing in and letting be

I: Investigate what is arising through feeling and sensation

N: Nurture what needs attention

Our stories are intertwined with our life time and our time line of life. Stories are like the infrastructure of our memory and journey in time. Stories are the fascia, the weave, the ligaments of our lifetime. And yet we are more than our stories.

In his book, *This Life Is Joy*, Unity pastor and teacher Roger Teel talks about how consciousness is shaped by our stories, which are often trapped in our time-bodies. But consciousness transcends our bodies, our stories and indeed, even time. Teel very simply identifies three types of stories we tell about ourselves, about others, and about our lifetime. They are:

The Old – what we have believed or thought

The Cold – lacking warmth, love or heart connection

The Told – what others have said about us or to us

Yet these stories can be transformed into:

The Gold – our real, essential, deep, unique value, glory and goodness

This is the alchemy of grace, prayer and work. Such transformation in present time of our past or future self is important work, and it is why time becomes the location of so much important work. The challenge is that, as author

W.H. Auden put it, “we would rather be ruined than changed. We would rather die in our dread than climb the cross of the moment and see our illusions die.”

Thomas à Kempis, writing five hundred years ago, also understood the importance of this process of dying to our self-bound stories. He taught in his enduring masterpiece *The Imitation of Christ*, that “you must give all to get all, and nothing of yourself is to remain.” By self, perhaps he means story? Can we really separate our self from our stories? We can by way of self-observation and non-identification.

Modern Fourth Way teacher Rodney Collin gives useful guidance on the conjunction of our stories with our lifetime. He writes in *The Theory of Conscious Harmony*, “What strange things happen to us, when we are alert [more conscious]. Fate [time, life] pushes us into a corner, and if we don’t try to slip out from under, teaches us as much in minutes as would otherwise take years to

learn. But what is this fate which knocks the ground from under our feet precisely that we should learn to fly? And who arranges it? That we must find out. As one goes on...it will happen more and more. Sometimes disconcerting, sometimes unbearable – but those moments when we are stripped of habit, and left helpless, are really the moments of our opportunity. It is important not to struggle against them or run away – but quietly go through them to something new.”

Perhaps the essence of Collin’s teaching can be constated this way: we are here to learn how to take responsibility for our life, understanding that responsibility means the ability to respond more consciously, instead of compulsively, instinctively, or unconsciously reacting. And in this way bring about a different kind of fate; a fate wherein life and all our life events become our teacher not necessarily our destiny. We need spiritual practices to help us take responsibility for our life, and

learn new tools that nurture and hone our ability to respond versus react. I love the way the Sufi poet Rumi captured this way of practice: “Close both eyes to see with the *other* eye.” Meditative methods such as Centering Prayer and RAIN help us to see with the *other* eye.

Religion at its heart, is a way to bind us back to this deeper, essential way of seeing and being. Increasingly, in our time, spiritual practices, such as daily meditative prayer, are returning to help renew and awaken religion and religious communities. American scholar Frederick Streng defines religion as a “means of ultimate transformation ... An ultimate transformation is a fundamental change from being caught up in the troubles of common existence to living in such a way that one can cope at the deepest level with these troubles. That capacity for living allows one to experience the most authentic or deepest reality – the ultimate.” We could say, transformation enables us to not be *caught* up in or swamped by our troubles experienced in time and life, but rather *taught* by the

experiences we have in time and life.

The Trance of Our Times

Our times are uniquely tempting to get caught in. Never has distraction, information or entertainment been so readily available in such abundance. 5G and the internet enable endless devices to distract us. Our political culture also provides a cauldron of life that we may easily get caught up in, like a heavy fishing net catches its prey, even the fish in the deep sea. One must be vigilant not to get caught by culture, but taught by it. In this poignant year of political energies, people on the Way, this community who wishes for the Way to draw us deeper, must honestly acknowledge how the politics of the nation cannot just be a source of identification, but an opportunity for personal transformation.

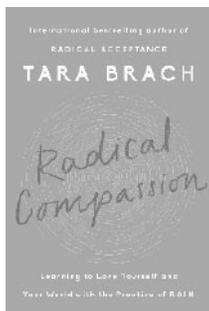
Perhaps holding a wish for our culture – remembering our future, and what a consciously chosen love might look like for our future as a community, state, country, planet, and cosmos. We can learn lessons from the past that encourage us for the present and future. For example, in 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville began publishing his

masterpiece *Democracy in America*. I recently began re-reading this for the first time in years and was happily surprised to discover that, even in the early 1800s, two hundred years ago, democracy and elections in America were the same psychologically then as they are today.

Here’s one example of the enduring insight of Tocqueville’s observations: “Long before the appointed day arrives, the election becomes the greatest and, as it were, the only matter which occupies people’s minds ... Intrigues multiply and turmoil spreads. Citizens divide up between several camps each of which adopts the name of its candidate. The whole nation descends into a feverish state; the election becomes the daily theme of newspapers, the subject of private conversations, the object of every maneuver and every thought, the only concern of the present moment.”

Life, time and situations can become great teachers. But they can also be cunning nets that catch our attention. Remember your future. See with a different inward eye. Practice methods that transform us from the trance of our times. 🕒

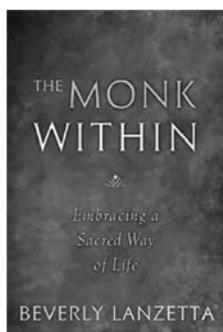
BOOK LOOK



Tara Brach's new book, *Radical Compassion*, expands her teaching on the practice of the RAIN method, mentioned in our lead article. Brach's teaching comes from a practitioner's heart. Her wisdom is soaked in the silence. And her methodology enhances our understanding of the Work, updating it and putting in conversation

with current and important themes, such as having more trauma informed understanding of what is occurring in meditation, and especially the experience of what Fr. Thomas Keating calls "Unloading." Brach's book is a practical primer that deepens our Work in observing negative thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes. Her chapter on the method of RAIN and relationships is profoundly useful and practical. Spiritual communities everywhere will be blessed by Tara Brach's understanding, being and teaching. ☸

2020 ANNUAL COMMUNITY READING



In 2020, we invite you to read one book as our community reading. Beverly Lanzetta's *The Monk Within* offers a significant resource that supports our evolution into The Journey School and its Oblate's Vow and Rule of Life. Lanzetta's description and call to re-imagine

the spiritual life through the lens of the call to become "A Universal Monk" is one of the many compelling aspects of this book. ☸



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I am the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6

ANNUAL AIM: THE WAY DRAWS US DEEPER

LIFE IS A SCHOOL FOR AWAKENING

BY PAMELA BEGEMAN

We belong to the Fourth Way
which is the most difficult way of all
because it must be practiced
in the midst of life. ...

The Fourth Way
must always be related
to the varying circumstances of life
and can never become
fixed and habitual.

Suddenly it may be necessary to alter
the whole external scheme of things.

...

So, we have work in the midst of life,
surrounded by all the misfortunes
of life, and eventually
life becomes our teacher.

Maurice Nicoll, "The Fourth Way,"
Commentaries, Vol.1

*I have the strength for everything
through the one who empowers me.*

Philippians 4:13

"The spiritual journey – which is the whole of life –
is a training in consent to God's presence and to all reality.

... This gradual training in consent is the school of divine love in which God
invites us to accept the divine plan to share the divine life with us in a way
that transcends all that the human imagination can foresee."

Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love*

I awake not feeling well. I feel
the sensations of swollen, scratchy
throat, of stuffy sinuses, of low
energy; at the same time, there is
an affirming sense of overall health
and vitality. I remember the prayer
I pray every morning before my
feet touch the ground: *This is the
day the Lord has made, let us be glad
and rejoice in it.* There is gratitude,
even as there is discomfort. As the
instinctive/moving center borrows
from other centers to address the
bugs in the body, I know from
experience to be vigilant about
the state of the other centers – to
be watchful so as not to become

negative about the situation and
the day or letting the mind project
scenarios in the future as we begin
a month of travel. This is the work
for today. Everything is useful for
my transformation.

I load dishes into the dishwasher
and move to wipe counters and put
away food. My husband removes
what I have loaded and reorganizes
the dishwasher. Water and debris
fly everywhere. I feel energy rise
and words forming, but nothing
makes it out of the mouth. The
energy dissipates and I'm grateful
for the opportunity to choose love.
Life is a school of divine love, if I

awaken to it.

“[P]erceive the goldmine that ordinary life contains. Daily life is practice number one for a Christian ... The contemplative dimension of the Gospel perceives in daily life the treasures of holiness hidden in the most trivial and mundane events.” Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

The Work has a wonderfully neutral term for describing all of life’s dramas and traumas as “events.” Events and the actors within these events are the curriculum of the school of life. Events recur – the curriculum repeats itself – until we awaken to a different way to receive, understand, choose or live these events. While the content of events may vary, the context is always the same: our highest good and the evolution of ourselves into the fullness of the image and likeness of God.

A few months ago, an event prompted me to write a letter, which led to conversations, which led to modifications in the letter, which, after being sent, led to a vulnerable group dialogue and an opening for change, understanding and an affirmation of shared values. It was a fruitful process for all involved. I learned how angry I was when I wrote the letter, and my friends helped me learn that truth can never be separated from love. Their own loving response outlined the lack of love in my views and awakened

me to a new level of understanding and compassion. Some debris came out of the shadow and showed itself in the light. Greater wholeness resulted. Everything is useful for my transformation.

“Life is simple. Everything happens for you, not to you. Everything happens at exactly the right moment, neither too soon nor too late. You don’t have to like it ... it’s just easier if you do.” Byron Katie

Many years ago when it was clear that my first marriage was over, I made several aims related to the event called divorce, primarily that I would not make any decisions out of anger, and that I would continue to love my ex-husband, despite the difficulties of the circumstances. It was a long, arduous process with a multitude of setbacks, temptations and suffering. Now, love remains between us and the circle of family gatherings has expanded beyond the norm to include him and his significant other. We co-parent, we reminisce, we enjoy family dinner and game nights. I learned a lot and still learn a lot from this relationship as it continues to sweeten and ripen. Everyone is a teacher.

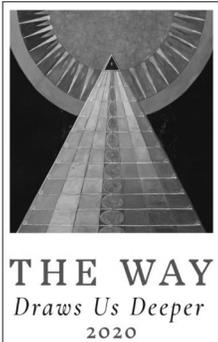
“The inscrutable ways of God... are never to be underestimated. The divine mystery is embedded in our lives and will always draw us on to new life, if we do not block the movement of the Spirit.” Ilia Delio, *Birth of*

a Dancing Star: From Cradle Catholic to Cyborg Christian

God is in all and all is in God. I wish to be awake to the movement of the Spirit in all events and people. I am aware that every act, thought, feeling and word is recorded in the Universe for all time and I feel increasingly aware and responsible for the energy I add to the atmosphere of this suffering planet. And frankly, I don’t want the karma. I practice spiritual hygiene, to clean up as I go and not accumulate more to heal and digest. In fact, the Universe is handing me karma in increasingly shorter cycles: I make a judgmental comment and five minutes later I’m doing the same thing, or the same comment is directed at me from someone else. *Thank you. I owe you everything. You owe me nothing.* Stop and let that person inch their car into the flow of traffic. Pick up garbage along the road. Bless those who curse my dog and me walking on a street with no sidewalks. Be quick to apologize and quick to forgive – I don’t want the burden and inner poisoning and I don’t want it passed along in the field of consciousness. Be patient with other’s mistakes, because I knowingly and unknowingly make them all the time. And because I am in you and you are in me; there is no other. *Daily life is practice number one – the school of divine love.* Everything is useful for my awakening and transformation, without exception. Except, of course, if I’m asleep. ☺

2020 AIM: THE WAY DRAWS US DEEPER

AN INVITATION 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 renew your intention and will to God

... to participate in a year dedicated to “The Way Draws Us Deeper”

... to move ever deeper together as a community of intention, practice and devotion. *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 aim. This month, we reflect and look deeper at “Life as Teacher,” while last month’s theme was “One Work.”

Some of the ongoing ways to participate in the annual aim are:

1. Twice daily Centering Prayer practice
2. Daily reading of Scripture
3. Daily reading of the Work of Inner Christianity
4. Daily conscious movement (e.g., tai chi, yoga, walking)
5. Commitment to attend Centering Prayer retreats annually
6. Seva group or youth education program participation
7. Tithing
8. Regular attendance at Sunday Services

Please prayerfully consider any or all of these offerings. To learn more about the 2020 annual aim “The Way Draws Us Deeper” or to participate and receive a beautiful packet of the monthly themes, please contact the Church office.

NEW ROLES FOR THE JOURNEY SCHOOL

To support the Aim and Wish for The Journey School, here is a summary of the new roles and staffing the Board of Directors has approved:

ABBOT/ABBESS In last month’s issue of *The Mark*, we announced Mary Anne Best as our first Abbess of The Journey School and Oblates. The role of the Abbess was described on page 11.

FACULTY In collaboration with the minister and abbess, at least four Faculty members provide programmatic oversight and teaching to The Journey School curriculum and The Journey Groups, modeling the Teachings and Being of the Church to help fulfill the Church’s mission and purpose as stated in the Bylaws.

PRESENTERS A Presenter is filled by a lay person from within the Church community and an active Oblate within The Journey School. Presenters will be annually invited by the minister and Abbess to prepare a brief teaching lesson for The Journey School.

CURRICULUM WRITING TEAM The Curriculum Writing Team develops the content for the weekly Journey School email. This team has two or three members, including the Abbess and at least one Faculty member, and works in collaboration with the minister’s editorial review.

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

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

LIFE AS OUR TEACHER IN THE FOURTH WAY BY NATHAN JONES

Work Idea: The Work of Inner Christianity is frequently referred to as the Fourth Way, which relates to the four ways we are provided to work on ourselves including: the Way of the Fakir, the first way; the Way of the Monk, the second way; the Way of the Yogi, the third way; and the Fourth Way, where we use life experienced both externally and internally as our teacher. It has been said that the Fourth Way is both the shortest and most difficult. It allows us to remain in our daily life with our current relations and social obligations. It does not ask us to sacrifice, move away or renounce. It offers us a living system, a living teaching that we can put on. It provides us with specific Work that we are to do when we desire to

develop. It tells us that the current situations we find ourselves in are the absolute best for our own unique development. One primary objective of the Fourth Way is the increase of consciousness through understanding.

Work Source: “The Work is what is called the *Fourth Way* as distinct from the three other Ways. It is in life and so a person must know how to be in life and how to use life and get what they want from life and at the same time be in the Work. This is only possible for certain kinds of people – namely, “Good Householders” – who are those who do their duty in life but do not believe in life. And you must realize that in this Work it is not demanded of you that you give up life or anything

of that kind. On the contrary, this Work makes you realize that you must use life as far as you can for experience. But you must not trust life and get lost in it and think that the goal lies in life-experiences.” Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, p. 92.

Application: It is said that the first test of the *Fourth Way* is that it must be found. To that, we say, “Welcome.” Now ask yourself what does it mean to not “believe in life”? Would the belief in life bring you here? Perhaps the notion, suspicion or conviction of that which is beyond life has delivered you up. If upon seeing my neighbor, an emotion of envy develops inside of me and I let it control me, if I identify with it, I am not using life as my teacher.

continued from page 9

On the contrary, if we recognize that feeling, that 'I', and observe it thereby becoming more conscious, *not* letting it control me, knowing that the feeling is not I, then I am beginning to use life as my teacher. Can you identify a specific emotion that arises when you are around a family member, friend or coworker? Observe that feeling and know that it is not you. Remember, you are a child of the creator.

Further Resource:

Investigate the Work concept of Good Householder. A Good Householder is said to be reasonably well rounded in life. One who is decently adapted to the external world prior to engaging the internal world through the Work. The Work, it is said, is not for lunatics or tramps. Lunatics as defined by "enthusiasts who wish to change the world." Tramps as defined by "those who will not work." It is important to keep in mind that likely, you would not be here or be reading this if you didn't already meet some level of the definition of a Good Householder. In the *Commentaries* on page 1180, an interesting light is shined on this concept of the Good Householder. ☺

LESSONS IN TRUTH

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS 7:30-9:00 PM

FEBRUARY 12-MARCH 25, 2020

WITH TIM COOK

Lessons in Truth is a clear, concise representation of metaphysical Christianity. These spiritual concepts show us how to increase our personal empowerment and enhance our spiritual growth. Our lives can be transformed by the power of our thoughts, words, and beliefs. The book, *Lessons in Truth* by H. Emilie Cady, is needed for each class meeting. It is available in the bookstore. This is a required class for church membership and is only offered once a year.

Please pre-register with the office.512-347-9673
or officemgr@consciousharmony.org

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 25

The spiritual radiation of a community depends on the commitment of its members to the inward journey and to each other.

To offer one another space
in which to grow as persons
is an integral part of this commitment.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES

NOON AND 6:30PM

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on February 26. We mark ourselves with the sign of an ashen cross, as a symbol that begins our community journey toward Easter. Like Advent, Lent is a season of preparing for a deepening, awakening and understanding of the Christ Way. During Lent, many of us may add a spiritual practice of diminishment such as fasting from food or TV, or add an increased practice of almsgiving or service. This year, in our Lenten sermon series, we will focus on observing and non-identifying with the various lies of separation that exist in our lives and in our culture.

UPCOMING CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS

AT THE CHURCH OF CONSCIOUS HARMONY

Feb 5	9:00am-5:30pm (optional 7:00am-7:15pm)	\$20
Feb 22	9:00am-4:00 pm	\$20*
Feb 22-23	Sat 9:00am-4:00pm & Sun 1:00-5:00pm	\$50*
Feb 29	9am-12:30pm	\$10

*Please bring your own lunch.

Cost is a suggested love offering. Scholarships are available as needed.

Register with the CCH office or website at least two days prior.

OVERNIGHT RETREATS

AT CEDARBRAKE RETREAT & RENEWAL CENTER

Mar 6-15	10-day Lenten	\$895
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Add \$10/night for a single room. Please contact the CCH office to reserve a space.

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

For more details, visit
consciousharmony.org
or call 512-347-9673

SPECIAL EVENTS

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Feb 5 9am-5:30pm
\$20 Preregister in the office

Two-Day Commuter Retreat
Feb 22 9am-4pm, Feb 23 1-4pm
\$50 Preregister in the office

Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Feb 29 9am-12:30pm
\$10 Preregister in the office

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

Mondays
Yin Yoga 6-7:15pm \$15
Preregister: AwakenedHeartAustin@gmail.com

Wednesdays
Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm
Contemplative Communion Service 6:30-7:15pm
Lessons in Truth 7:30-9pm

Thursdays
The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

Saturdays
Scriptorium 11-11:50am

DAILY

Centering Prayer Service
Theosis Chapel 7-7:35am

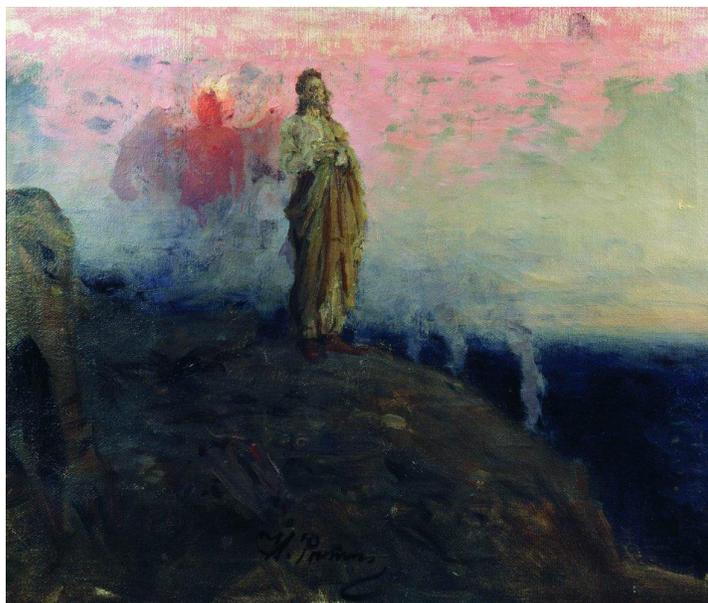
Recordings of services are available
through the Bookstore and online at
www.consciousharmony.org



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LENT

*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

It is essential to remind ourselves again and again
that God and we cannot be separated.
He sees the world out of our eyes;
God works through our hands;
God speaks through our voice; God walks on our feet.
He is even present in our sins.
This is why we should not subject God
to the indignities that our sins involve.
We are temples of the Holy Spirit . . .
The first stage of our spiritual journey
is bound to be experienced as the destruction
of our worldview and self-image,
the uprooting and tearing down,
the boring from within and battering from without.
God tearing down the false self [to make way
for the experience of the Divine Indwelling].
Paul says it has not entered the mind of anybody
what God has prepared for those who love Him.
The return to innocence is where we are heading,
all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding . . .
This is the project that is being celebrated during Lent.
Hence, Lent can be painful and filled with temptation.

Thomas Keating, *Reawakenings*