

The Truth Seeing Is Freeing, Feeling Is Healing

BY PETER HAAS

Over the year, as we focused on our annual aim *The Way Draws Us Deeper*, we discovered connections more deeply than we ever realized, even while we are physically apart. There are many fellow pilgrims of this Way all around our country and world, and we have grown deeper together. This has been a year of discovering the many ways the Work of Inner Christianity draws us deeper and holds us together.

Jesus replied to Thomas, 'I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life. Everyone is on this journey deeper into Beloved Source, and this journey is what I am here with you to reveal. This journey into and beyond union is the wayless Way. As it goes for me, so it goes for you.' John 14:6 (Contemplative Inner Transformation Version)

As individuals and Oblates, as Work partners and Journey Groups, and as a contemplative community, we have been increasingly freed from our fragmentation, multiplicity, mechanical sleep, reactivity and negativity. We have learned how to see ourselves more truthfully and more completely, to see what our self is and is not, and to receive the grace of understanding others as they are and are not. As we each read this, let's reflect and celebrate the countless ways the Work has freed us a bit more from the bondage of our unconscious depths and opened us to a deeper love, consciousness and understanding.

To continue this transformation in 2021, we unveil our wish and annual aim theme:

Truth Opens The Eyes of Our Hearts:

To understand and experience
a deeper seeing – through the
purification and illumination of the
emotional (inner) parts of centers.

We wish to see Truth in all and through everything; to deepen and expand our seeing, for in our seeing is freeing and in our feeling is healing.

On the spiritual journey, truth and inner seeing go hand-in-hand. The root idea of the Greek word *theoria* (contemplation) was and is *seeing*, which connects the practice of Centering Prayer with the Work practice of Self-Observation.

In an illuminating teaching on the importance of contemplation, Plotinus, a third-century philosopher of the inner life, invites us to understand that, "We must close our eyes and invoke a new manner of seeing ... a wakefulness that is the birthright of us all, though few put it to use." Echoing Plotinus, I can hear Fr. Thomas Keating's voice say, "close your eyes and half the world goes away." Anything is possible in this inner world of seeing and silence.

Perhaps another synonym for seeing is the word "awakening." The Greek word for Truth was and is *Alethia*, which is comprised of the negative particle "A" meaning no, not or non plus the root *Lethe* meaning sleep or forget. So the Greek word for Truth means: Nonsleep. Awake. Waking. Remember!

Thus, Truth is that which awakens us, helps us remember ourselves and keeps us from falling back asleep. The practices of contemplation and Self-Observation are how we connect with Truth and get transformed by Truth.

Notice the connection between the practices of Self-Observation and contemplation. Both are practices of seeing at deeper and more psychological and spiritual levels. This year's aim will be a significant fusion of the two streams that feed our church: the contemplative and the esoteric – Centering Prayer and the Work of Inner Christianity. In short:

1. Contemplation is a way of

- seeing and being seen.
- 2. The Work and Self-Observation is a way of freeing and being freed.

Paired, these practices and ideas will meet us wherever we are on the Journey. Till the end, all of us can keep consenting to seeing and being seen.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of God's calling, what are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us... Ephesians 1:18-19

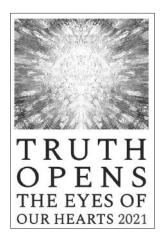
Truth is a full-spectrum experience – intellectual, emotional, and physical – of both seeing and being seen; of both feeling and being felt. Truth deeply opens, reveals, and most of all heals our Emotional Center. This mystery

and beauty that is the Emotional Center deserves our attention in 2021 for the sake of Truth opening, freeing and healing the emotional center, and all its aspects and dimensions.

Self-discovery can be frightening when we can't bear what we see. That is why we will proceed slowly, kindly and with deep empathy for the human condition. We need each other in community for this Work of seeing and freeing, even when it seems that we can't see anything.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a work student who has no need to be ashamed, rightly consenting to the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

Let's wish to continue the journey together, Working ever deeper, along the wayless Way that draws us deeper and freer of self.



We believe ...

- God is all in all. God is eternally revealing as the Trinity − Transcendent Father, Omnipresent Son and Immanent Holy Spirit − active within us as the Divine Indwelling.
- ₩ We are created in the image and likeness of God. Our basic nature, like God's nature, is absolute good.
- ➤ Transformation into Christ, unity with the Living God, and participation in the evolution of all creation is possible in this life. Indeed, it is the design and purpose of every human life.
- ₩ We open ourselves to transforming grace through our consent in Centering Prayer, the Eucharist, the Word and spiritual community.
- ♣ God is Love. Love is eternally present. We are called to participate in the dynamism of this love, for God, for one another and for all creation.

Excerpted from *Statement of Beliefs*, The Church of Conscious Harmony

Our Annual Aim

You are invited to join in community

... to renew your consent and will to God,
... to participate fully in a year dedicated to

Truth Opens The Eyes of Our Hearts
... to move ever deeper together
as a community of intention, practice and devotion.

All glory to God!

The journey is realizing the Truth already with us and then allowing it to transform us.

Christ's revelation, "I am the Way and the Truth" allows no separation between the Way (means) and its end (Truth).

Our end being transformation into Christ, when the Christian comes to the end of his journey there is the same truth he began with, only now unveiled in all its realty and marvel. The journey is one of gradual transformation, ever seeing and living more profoundly the Truth already with us.

Truth was never somewhere beyond or down the road, it is always here and now, the means (Christ) being the end Itself.

Bernadette Roberts, "Means-Ends,"
The Christian Contemplative Journey, Essays on the Path

Consecrate us in the Truth. Your word is Truth. John 17:17

All are welcome to participate in the Church of Conscious Harmony's yearlong aim: *Truth Opens The Eyes of Our Hearts*. To RSVP to the annual aim invitation and register for any or all of the unique offerings on pages 5-6, please go to consciousharmony.org.

THREE SPECIAL INVITATIONS ...

THE JOURNEY SCHOOL: A School of Transformative Spiritual Psychology and Practice OF THE CHURCH OF CONSCIOUS HARMONY

THE JOURNEY SCHOOL

The Journey School aims to be a spiritual resource for anyone who wishes to more deeply recognize, receive and respond to God as the center of their lives and participate consciously in the transformational spiritual journey into Christ. As such, The Journey School provides the community, structure, teaching and support for the spiritual journey deeper into God's love.

The Journey School consists of:
An annual yearlong curriculum delivered via weekly emails which forms the foundation for the Thursday
evening class and Journey Group discussion.
A weekly Thursday evening class that explores the ideas and practices of the Work of Inner Christianity
integrated with wisdom from the contemplative Christian tradition, a gathering of sharing and discovery in
a community of high intention and purpose.
Weekly Journey Groups, the primary place for the nurturing of spiritual community in a small group
setting. Discussion is shaped by the weekly curriculum content and how participants are engaging with i
in their daily lives. Journey Groups involve a one-year commitment, beginning in February and concluding
in December.
Work Partners, one-on-one relationships to Work intimately with another, supporting one another, setting
daily aims, and holding one another accountable.
Gurdjieff Movements, sacred dances having as their aim equilibrium and unity of being, balancing the three centers
working in all three lines. Participation involves a one-year commitment, February-December.

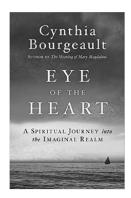
OBLATES

An Oblate of The Church of Conscious Harmony consents to journey deeper into Christ, what theologians call *Theosis*, or simply, Love. Participation as an Oblate is a declaration of intentional relationship to the Divine Mystery that is God and to all creation.

To become an Oblate, a vow is taken, renewable each January. The vow is born of a personal hunger and commitment for transformation into Christ and a wish to live a committed life in service of this aim. In making their vow, Oblates commit themselves to God and to living the Oblate Rule of Life so to actively participate in the spiritual journey while engaging the transformative process as "monks in the world." Oblates fully participate in The Journey School programs by attending the Thursday evening class, receiving the weekly email and participating in a Journey Group (with the option of having a Work partner and participating in the Gurdjieff Movements). The vow is to God alone, yet lived out through and with the Church community.

In addition, the Oblate *Rule of Life* consists of the following practices:

- Twice daily Centering Prayer practice
- 2. Daily reading of Scripture
- Daily study and application of the ideas of the Work of Inner Christianity



2021 Annual Aim Reading

It is not surprising that Cynthia Bourgeault's teaching and writing connects Christian teachings and The Work of Inner Christianity.

In *Eye of the Heart*, Cynthia helps us understand not just the role of the Higher Intellectual and Emotional centers, but also points the way to the body's role in our spiritual journeys, here and beyond.

We suggest reading this profound book slowly and in small portions. It may be more helpful to start at the back and move to the front. Of particular importance is the brief chapter on Fr. Thomas Keating and Abbot Joseph Boyle of St. Benedict's Monastery.

Paired with our 2021 Annual Aim theme, *The Truth Opens Our Hearts*, we look forward to robust community discussions about the profoundly rich and meaningful ideas embedded within Cynthia's teaching.

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- 4. Daily conscious movement (e.g., tai chi, yoga, walking)
- 5. Weekly immersion in a Eucharistic worship service
- 6. Spiritual companioning with the Minister, the Abbot/Abbess or Minister's designate
- 7. Seva or youth program service
- 8. Commitment to attend a multi-day Centering Prayer retreat
- 9. Attendance at the annual weekend Oblate retreat
- 10. Tithing

THE OBLATE-CIRCLE OF DEVOTION

Those in the Oblate-Circle of Devotion have been practicing the Work of Inner Christianity for many years and wish to move deeper into the stillness and simplicity of silence and prayer, perhaps in expanded solitude. They commit themselves totally to God and to living a personalized expression of the Oblate *Rule of Life*, tailored to their own choosing, as directed by the Spirit and supportive to their life state and stage. The intention of the Oblate-Circle of Devotion is to affirm that the spiritual journey leads many to a deep interior quiet, where all of life becomes prayer and prayer becomes life in self-emptying, love for all and everything. Commitments to the Oblate-Circle of Devotion may be discerned in conversation with the Abbess.

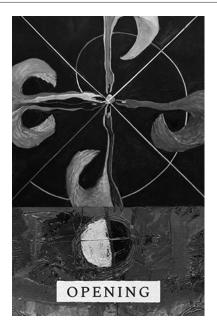
Please prayerfully consider these invitations for The Journey School, to be a CCH Oblate, and/or to be in the Oblate-Circle of Devotion. Reference consciousharmony.org for additional details about the various ways to participate. Registration closes on January 31^{st.}

All religion, all esoteric teaching, is about the fact that we are born as self-developing organisms ... in order, by a certain kind of work on ourselves, to reach something inherent in us (as a new being is inherent in an egg) which is called Real I ... what is called Christ born in us. ...

[T]he Kingdom of Heaven lies within you and that means the realization of Real I. If you are only mechanically good or good externally for the sake of your reputation, you can never get to this secret goal which is inherent from birth in us. ... Now the application of the Work to yourself is all about making it possible to go on a journey, spiritual or psychological, towards what is really you, Real I in you.

Maurice Nicoll, "On Practical Work," Commentaries

In the Name of God Transcendent, God Omnipresent, God Immanent, the Holy Living Trinity. Amen.



Consecrate us in the Truth. Your word is Truth. John 17:17

Annual Aim: Truth Opens the Eyes of Our Hearts

OPENING BY KRISTINE GRACE

We begin to see the poverty
of all our feelings
and the need for a feeling
that is more pure,
more penetrating. ...
A wish arises to be more myself,

A wish arises to be more myself, to open to a very high part of myself and experience an emotional force that knows.

I need to hear it.

For this it is necessary to reach a depth of silence where my feeling is no longer attached to my usual egoism.

Only in silence is this possible. ...

Help appears in the form of a more active feeling ...

a feeling that comes from

Jeanne de Salzmann. *The Reality of Being, The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff*, p. 72

the higher emotional center.

The journey is realizing the Truth already with us and then allowing it to transform us.

Bernadette Roberts, "Means-Ends," The Christian Contemplative Journey, Essays on the Path, pp. 231-232

When all things were in quiet silence ... thy powerful word ... leapt down from heaven.

Wisdom 18:14

I can remember easing my aching body onto the horse's bare back – my root chakra sitting directly atop his heart chakra. Every feeling is shared. As we walk along, the expansion of his breath rises up like a wave pulls at you when you stand in the ocean. But this wave doesn't break. The horse protests with a nip and a swish of the tail. Ah, I am too closed ...

Horses were my first Work partners and Centering Prayer teachers when I worked as a horse trainer and coach for twenty years. By the time I showed up at The Church of Conscious Harmony, thrown out from the perfect storm of chronic illness, divorce and homelessness, I was very aware of what living on a steady diet of

"programs for happiness" can do and wanted no more of it. I arrived at CCH nine months before Tim and Barbara Cook retired as ministers. I was awestruck one day with an experience of openness so pure and full of nothing except the essence of aliveness that I was ecstatic. Tim told me that living in this openness would become my normal every day. There was something about CCH that reminded me of being with horses even before I knew anything about Gurdjieff's horse and carriage allegory of the Work of Inner Christianity, so I decided to stay and set an aim to be awake no matter what. It was these first nine months at CCH that gave me glimpses of the brilliant Truth within and birthed the confidence to navigate the growing pains of this new beginning.

When my divorce was final, my doctor wanted me to experiment with living in a drier climate to see if this would take a burden off my exhausted immune system that was deathly allergic to mold. I found a small Buddhist retreat center with tents in the Arizona high desert on sacred ground of the great Apache warrior Cochise, the last great Indian chief to die free. I packed up my fourteen-year old car, my two old chihuahua dogs, and headed out. Part of the deal to stay there was that I have a contemplative practice, sit in silence every day and meet with the resident teacher at least once a week. This felt more like hitting the jackpot than being exiled.

I was so exhausted and stressed that I was having trouble coming into the silence in Centering Prayer. After trying the resident teacher's helpful guidance, I was astounded to see the difference in my practice and my countenance. This practice allowed me to see how my energy was moving to self-observe more consistently and precisely. The refuge of the desert showed me I had been stuck in fight-flight-freeze most of my life. Hypervigilance of all that seemed wrong dissipated into silence where I could trust the benevolence of life.

Alas, staying in a tent in the middle of summer was too hard in my sick condition. Though I did not want to return to Austin and its

moldy climate, I heard in a prayer to do so. Through another series of little miracles, I ended up in a golden pagoda sitting across from an orange-robed Buddhist monk. Here I learned how to soften the concentration practice I was given in the desert with a practice of radiating loving kindness. After many months of practice on the cushion, walking, eating, serving monks, cleaning bathrooms, going for a drive to get food for the monastery; always intent on being attentive to love; one day it all tipped over into what seemed like a great emptiness. Here was a new experience of internal and external considering - an experience of openness that helped me stop looking at people as damaged. People were still cracked, but light streamed through those cracks and I knew that is what we are. I found great joy in serving and that became one of the most transformational awakening practices of my life. The lie of separation was ending.

By this time, I thought perhaps God had some unusual plan for me to serve Her as a Buddhist nun. I felt cheated when I had to leave the monastery because there was no ordination for women and I could not find another that had mold-free lodging. Another miracle found a supporter so I could get into government-assisted housing that was brand new. But there was fire to come. In the last

eighteen months, my dog who had been my greatest companion was killed in a freak accident, then my entire life's writing on my spiritual journey was lost in a computer crash, and the training I was in to become a meditation teacher was canceled when the internationally respected teacher was fired due to his sexual misconduct. Feeling called to create a contemplative residential community for differently-abled people, I sought out mentors and formed a little group of women who met every week online, but living together was not to be for this time. I had to move again after more mold. Finally, exasperated, I enrolled in a coaching course to begin offering spiritual direction sessions online; but a roof leak spread mold in my new apartment, and my brain became too impaired to keep up with the assignments and this failed as well. Clearly, it was time to face the call to healing that I had denied and walked away from years ago.

In all the grief, I knew that openness was the only thing that was going to keep me functioning. It required constant opening to what had been held in the shadows. At first, I felt ashamed at not having seen this before, but then I saw these things being held for a while in the subconscious as merciful. I hadn't had the capacity to see it and to take new action. I finally stopped looking for someone to be my master teacher and settled in to

find the wisdom within.

This past year as an Oblate at CCH, continuing trauma therapy, getting certified in trauma-sensitive mindfulness and having to move for the sixteenth time in four years to stay out of mold, and once again being houseless, an internal sense of immovability arose that at first I mistook for a strange resistance. I came to recognize this as the feel of God keeping me in my center of gravity. Waiting for direction in life doesn't feel like waiting. It's more of a feeling of transcendence being right here, in the thick of life, knowing that this body and the happenings of life are all just dew drops that evaporate in the acknowledgement of "This is not I."

My experience of opening continues to expand. In my most awake moments of self-observing, or what I call no-self observing, I notice incoming impressions are just energy moving into an open heart that transmutes all into love. In the expansion of opening, I find in silence and emptiness a love so profound it is unidentifiable upon initial awareness. At first, it felt like it arrived to kill me. Indeed, it is capable of completely snuffing out any fantasy of self. It is totally impersonal and yet the most pure intimate giving. It cannot be resisted, it just is, and there is no choice, neither for me nor for it. This love gazes at me in my eyes, showing me how trying so hard to

be good is the most violent thing I do. My heart is sometimes so open it's as if I don't have a heart and I am the blood in the heart of God. Some days there are hours where no form of fear exists and has never been known anywhere in me, in others or on the planet. There is far more non-suffering than suffering in the world.

There is now an experience of a new body that is an uninfluenceable body inside of this carnal body. It is the Kristine that does not rely on outer circumstances, past or future, for life choices. Now the senses are for expressing the consciousness and will of this new body. This life is the monastery and this newly formed body is the abbess to be honored. This body is built to be mechanical with loving kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. The self that has continued to orient to the belief that it could be killed by mold or any other thing dissipates. I see the wound of losing everything and never knowing where my home is, however this seems like the painless scar of a transformed resurrected body. The more that I identify with this new body the more the carnal body is seen as constantly changing vibrating crystals with its only function to reflect Truth.

I remember a few years ago in a moment of spontaneous future memory saying, "There is nothing held in the body, the issues are in the tissues isn't true." My Work

partner was taken aback and I was too because I was far from living this, still working through trauma therapy learning to track emotions and release trauma from the body. I am so grateful for the openness of my Work partner, the spiritual companions I have met in CCH and all the other places I was led to. I wonder what is going to happen as what is left of this self and identity of this body continually orients to a permanent body of wisdom as all that is True. I open to the inevitable that this carnal body is healthy and finally has a resting place to call home on this earth living in the kingdom of heaven. Not long ago, I heard in prayer that I would be in Austin for the rest of "my" life. I see "my" life is coming to an end. I am glad I returned to Austin to find the keys to my treasure and know all is well. I wish for all the openness of this ocean of love living in God transcendent, God omnipresent and God immanent and indwelling.

... with the next breath of the horse, the wave begins to pull me in. Instead of being afraid of the expanded movement hurting my injured body, I rest into it. The wave rushes through me and the horse's whole body softens. Now we are one in the expanse where we are both moved and breathed by something far greater than what a whip or a heel of a boot can deliver.



THE CHURCH of CONSCIOUS HARMONY

7406 Newhall Lane Austin, Texas 78746 512.347.9673 512.347.9675 fax www.consciousharmony.org

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Jill Frank, Program Director
programdir@consciousharmony.org

NEWSLETTER Sandra Ely, Editor garzaely@swbell.net Carol Hagar, Design chagar@austin.rr.com My Father is still working, and I also am working.

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

ABOUT THE CENTERS BY NATHAN JONES

Work Idea: The Work teaches that each individual has three centers: the Intellectual Center, the Emotional and the Instinctive-Moving Center. Each Center is considered its own mind. The concept here is that there are three mostly distinct and separate minds in each individual. Roughly speaking, the centers correspond accordingly: the Intellectual Center involves thinking, the Emotional Center comprises feeling and the Instinctive-Moving Center contains acting and doing. Through self-observation, we can begin to determine which center we are in at any given time. The Work speaks to us of the importance of being in the right center for the right action. We want the surgeon using Intellectual Center instead of Emotional Center when performing an operation. The cowgirl would likely want to engage the Instinctive-Moving Center when riding a horse and the Emotional Center when singing

to the herd. It is necessary to develop all three centers to become a Balanced Person, which the Work speaks of achieving.

The Work envisions that most of our centers are further comprised of three aspects: mechanical, emotional and intellectual "divisions." Think of these "divisions" as operations or programs running on a central processor. Attention puts us into more conscious parts of centers, and activates more conscious, connected and balanced ways of being. There are three kinds of attention: zero attention, which is associated with mechanical divisions of centers; attracted attention, which is associated with emotional divisions of centers; and directed attention, which is associated with intellectual division of centers.

Work Sources: "There are three different people in everyone, to begin with – the Intellectual Person, the Emotional Person and the Instinctive-

JANUARY SUNDAY SERMON SERIES A Prayerful Heart

Eyes of the Heart January 3 January 10 Illumination

Hope January 17 Power January 24

Guidelines for Christian Life, Growth and Transformation

Fr. Thomas Keating's Open Mind, Open Heart recommends reading this spiritual journey principle three times in the method of Lectio Divina.

Guideline 36

Humility is an attitude of honesty with God, oneself, and all reality. It enables us to be at peace in the presence of our powerlessness and to rest in the forgetfulness of self.

Moving Person, corresponding to these three centers or minds. That is, a man thinks one thing, feels another, and 'senses' a third - that is, his sensations, which belong to his Instinctive Center, are different from his feelings, which belong to the Emotional Center, and his thoughts, which belong to the Intellectual Center." Nicoll, Commentaries, p. 69

"Question: I cannot see the importance of the stress laid on centers. Answer: It is very important to see that our mind is divided into (three) minds, that there is no unity in us, that the (three) minds or functions

are quite different. This alone gives one a different picture of oneself." Ouspensky, The Fourth Way, p. 60

Application: Begin the process of observing which center you are in at any given time. Non-critically self-observe. Just notice. Notice the different qualities between the different centers.

Further Resource: Review the diagrams of the three Centers in Maurice Nicoll's Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, pages 76-79.

IANUARY CALENDAR

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Journey School enrollment for 2021 begins Jan 3 online

One-Day Online Centering Prayer Retreat Jan 16 9am-3pm Register online

Introduction to Centering Prayer (online) Jan 16 10am-noon + 4 consecutive Tuesdays 7-8:15pm \$15 Register online

Introduction to the Work (online) Wednesdays Jan 27-Mar 3 7-8:30pm Register online

5-Day Centering Prayer Retreat Jan 22-26 \$540 at Čedarbrake Register with the office

MONTHLY

Caritas Donations
To continue our long standing partnership, please consider making a donation of food or money directly to caritasofaustin.org

*Godly Play Parable Cartoon Show Jan 9 11am

WEEKLY

Sundays

*Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am

*Intercessory Prayer 9am *Worship Service 10-11:30am

**Youth Program 1pm

Wednesdays

*Contemplative Worship Service 6:30-7:15pm

Thursdays

*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm begins Jan 14

Saturdays

*Scriptorium 11am *Compline 9-9:15pm

DAILY

*Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

*Please join these services, groups, and classes via online video conferencing. Contact the website for accessible links and more information.

**All our youth are invited to participate. Contact youthdir@consciousharmony.org for details.

Recordings of services are available online at www.consciousharmony.org

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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



EPIPHANY

Christmas is only the beginning. Christmas shows us the Word Made Flesh in the form of this little infant, a form that grows into His full humanity, and then the sacrifice of that human nature for the healing and salvation, or nowadays if you're into the scientific discoveries, evolution is the way of creation and then human development, including Jesus' own humanity, develops and becomes more complete and full and capable of being shared with others, always from a motive of unselfish love.

... We are invited to become living cells or members in the Mystical Body of Christ, which is Christ resurrected and Body glorified, and consumed in the fire of the Spirit, a fire that moves like a moving stream throughout the relationships in the Trinity and into which we're invited to share.

That's what's meant by "grace;" a sharing in the divine life itself, which means the divine light, life and love.

... It's impossible to imagine this, as Paul says, "What God has prepared for those who love Him."

Do you consent to become divine? That is the question of the day.

Thomas Keating, 'The Prayer for Us All' A Blessing for the Epiphany, *Awakenings*