



THE MARK

July 2022
Volume 34
Number 7

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



BEING HERE, BEING WITH, UNTIL WE'RE NOT

BY PETER HAAS

Our focus this July is on several simple yet profound practices that help us arise more consciously as embodied life. We need help being here, being present. We need help being with ourselves, with others, and with reality.

In 2022, we've turned our attention to the various ways our bodies are integral partners on our spiritual journeys. We're halfway through the year, so it is a good time to recall our aims and commitments we made to ourselves at New Year's or when we committed to this year's The Journey School. How is your year unfolding? What are you learning about yourself? Your practice? Your relationship(s)? Your beloved(s)? Your world? How is your being here-ness? Your being with-ness?

July is the month of Leo, the great celestial lion, whose constellation can be seen in the western sky about an hour after

sunset. In Thomas Merton's *The Tears of the Blind Lions*, we find a poem entitled "The Quickening of St. John the Baptist." Here are a few lines to let linger in your heart this July, especially on the dark nights, late in the heated night, underneath the summer sky:

Night is our diocese and silence
is our ministry.

Poverty our charity and
helplessness our tongue-tied
sermon ...

We are exiles in the far end of
solitude, living as listeners,
With hearts attending to the
skies we cannot understand;
Waiting upon the first far
drums of Christ the Conqueror.
Planted like sentinels upon the
world's frontier.

I encourage you to take a
moment this beautiful July,
on a mid-summer night, and
make effort to be here now.
Aim to be here now with our
beloved earth; your beloved self;
your beloved friends, children,

family, spouse or partner; your
beloved silence and most of
all your Beloved Source who
knows your secret name within
your heart, and whose nameless
name is known in your tears and
dancing. Be here, be with the
ones you've been given, until
you're not. For all our being is
a becoming, until it's not.

Raimon Panikkar reminds us
that "the void is not nothing, *neti*,
neti, *neti* does not mean nothing.
Niente nean means not yet, what
has not yet become. The not yet
of being." Life is not a void. God
is not nothing. Reality is not
empty. It is all becoming. It is all
in process. It is all not this because
it is still not yet. Everything is
open. God, life, reality is pure
possibility.

Being here and being with
others is a glorious yet ephemeral
gift. Robert MacFarlane in his
masterful book *Underland* reminds
us that "to be human means
above all to bury. *Humanitas* in

Latin comes first and properly from *humando*, meaning burying, burial, itself from the word *huma*, earth or soil. We are a burying species and a building species.” Our being here and being with is also a becoming toward non-being, or certainly a different kind of being. A being beyond the body, or perhaps a being beyond this particular body.

For each of us, death is not unexpected or unusual. It is not out of the ordinary or rare. Death for each of us is expected, a fact we may try to delay or ignore, but it is a certain part of our life. Death’s presence among us is universal and its effect upon each of us is unstoppable.

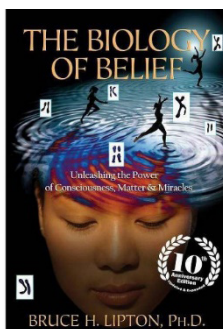
While the manner of death may be unknown now, the fact of our once and final undoing at death is known, certain and inescapable. This need not depress us, especially if we view death as the means by which, no matter the manner of dying, every person is released, separated and transformed to continue on in a different state of existence, being and indeed bliss.

We are here to be and become. Look up to the nighttime stars and listen to that time of dusk when the cicada gives way to the cricket. Pause to smell flowers and trees. Remember, as it goes for them, so it goes for us:

The bud gives way to the flower.
The flower gives way to fruit.
The fruit gives way to seed.
The seed gives way to spout.
The sprout gives way to stem.
The stem gives way to bud.
May God bless each of us

and the human family in these July days. May they make us regal, like the lion of Judah, roaring above in the heavens, on the prowl for beings to be with, attending to the roar that stuns us into silence. Ⓐ

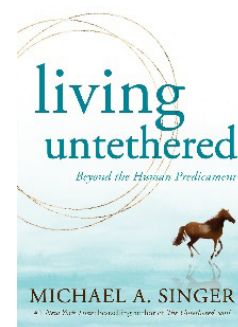
JULY-AUGUST COMMUNITY READING

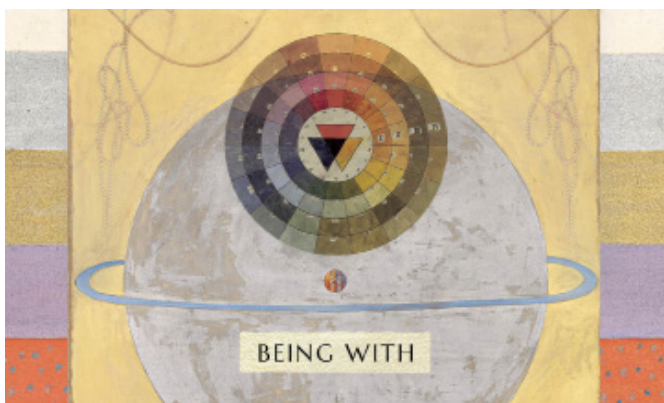


The Biology of Belief by Bruce Lipton, our July and August community reading, is an old friend for many of us. We return to this classic as a way of helping us remember how what we do effects who we are, and the power of thought and practices that help shape our genetic expression. This book is an encouragement to cherish our bodies by improving our thoughts. Ⓐ

BOOK LOOK

It is lovely to see Michael Singer’s highly anticipated sequel. *Living Untethered* continues his unique gift of interpreting ancient ideas in very accessible, practical ways for all of us, no matter where you are on the spiritual journey. For those who enjoyed Singer’s *The Untethered Soul*, you again will be blessed by his simple yet profound approach to the Work, in modern terms. Ⓐ





*Now and always may Christ be magnified in my body,
whether by life or death. Philippians 1:20*

ANNUAL AIM: ARISING AS EMBODIED LIFE

FROM SPIRITUALIZATION TO
BEING WITH BY JIM MOATS

Even more important ... is our need to experience our bodies – always provided that the body is not regarded merely as a thing, but as the means by which we manifest ourselves in the world as Persons. Whether it be in repose or in motion, the human body is intended to carry, transmit and bear witness to essential life which is designed to assume a particular form in the world in accordance with its inner image. In this way, the body bears witness to that Being which is ever striving within it towards manifestation. The word “body” here is not to be thought of in static terms: it implies rather the unity inherent in the changing pattern of posture, attitude and gesture by means of which an individual person lives out their life. ... The correct attitude necessary for the fulfillment of our life as persons is one in which our conditioned body has become transparent ... made permeable for the revelation of our essential being.

Karlfried Graf Dürckheim,
*The Way of Transformation:
Daily Life As Spiritual Practice*

The attitude we take, our inner and outer posture, is at
the same time our aim and our way.

Jeanne de Salzmann,
The Reality of Being: The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff

How has Being With inner and outer experiences shaped my life? This filter has me feeling a bit awkward, so I write, trusting something will come.

The first thing that comes to mind are a couple of recurring childhood experiences.

The first is of flickering candles creating a sensory experience of light and shadows, the fragrance of incense being cast into a sanctuary, rhythmic Latin chanting drawing me beyond understanding, icons and deep rich colors, and humble people kneeling and offering verbal and physical response to Latin utterances; these seem to have conspired to plant within me a longing for awe, wonder, and mystery and a fearful respect of the unknown.

The second relates to annual camping trips deep into the wilderness of Northern Minnesota with extended family in the early 1950s. Fishing on deep and often rough lakes in a small aluminum boat with feelings of trepidation and eagerness; exploring dark forests and the creatures they contained, with my older brother and cousin; eating what we caught and making fire from the wood we found; and a small boy complaining about carrying gallons of water for bathing and cooking. These planted a feeling of being at home in the beauty of nature, and an insatiable desire to explore.

In contrast, looking back at 1968 as a 20-year-old intelligence analyst in Vietnam finding patterns of strength and weakness and

imagining ways to project power and control, I see now that this experience activated within me a desire to dominate intellectually and a need to win. From that point on, intellectual rigor and discipline were applied to every part of life and I now see that this is the experience that caused me to harden my heart.

Forty-four years ago, when Becky told me we were going on a Marriage Encounter weekend, I resisted. A few weeks later, I found myself with several couples and a Jesuit priest. Talk of love, writing love letters and sharing from the heart with other couples made me very uncomfortable. But when one man shared his shift from pursuing accolades to receiving love, and how the realization that “God doesn’t make junk” changed his life, something opened.

Growing up in an Iowa railroad town, the distant nighttime sounds of powerful locomotives casting freight cars down one track and then another, became a comforting rumble to fall asleep to. At the heart of the yard, as it was called, is the roundhouse, the mechanism used to turn a locomotive in a new direction.

While I’d been charging down the success track for years and viewed the retreat as a distraction, the phrase “God doesn’t make junk” shocked me in a new direction, and over the weeks, months and years

that followed a struggle worked its way through my being.

In the immediate years following the retreat, I became tormented. Maintaining the professional identity I had constructed was in conflict with allowing myself to receive the love that the Marriage Encounter community offered. While straddling these tracks created inner torment, letting go of one seemed threatening, so I continued to hold on with all my strength far too long.

Finally, while participating in a distant business conference, the torment became too much. I left a workshop and returned to my hotel room. Upon closing the door, uncontrollable anguish began to pour out in tears. Laying on the floor, my trembling body pounded while shouting at God for help. I could no longer live this way. I needed liberty. I begged and pleaded for help until finally my agitated body quieted and a deep sense of assurance passed into me. On that floor, although I did not know how, I decided to follow my heart. Little did I know what that would entail.

From then on, an unquenchable longing for knowledge about God led me through churches, and years of intensive Bible study. At each station, I met wonderful men and women who embraced me and helped into and through

many transitions.

Early on, Isaiah 30:20-22 began speaking deeply to me. Even today, when I allow myself to resonate with this passage, tears of gratitude well up.

Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” Then you will desecrate your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold.

My church experiences reconnected me with a desire to explore and I had joined the board of a small international missions’ group that eventually asked me to move to Seattle to replace the founder. This offer entailed a cross-country move for my family and a departure from a business leadership place within our community. I initially said no, but was surprised when Becky said she thought the Spirit was in this.

Twelve months later, we found ourselves in Seattle. Ego had led me to believe that leading a technology business and leading a small underfunded international missions’ group would be similar and nothing could have been further from the truth, especially since our

field of work was Muslim Central Asia – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

A year into this role, I fell into a state of malaise and was unable to muster the energy needed to make decisions. Fortunately, a wonderful woman named Kathy who served as the Vice President understood what she was seeing and steered me toward a psychiatrist and a therapist.

The psychiatrist quickly diagnosed me with depression and advised, “If you continue to harness your life to the idea of success, you will move down a very dark road.” Lorraine, a therapist, practiced inner healing and I found myself being guided into visualizations where Jesus would talk with me and help me see that I had created a prison for myself and that the key to the door was in my possession. I see now that the reorientation mentioned by Isaiah, toward the inner journey, became embodied here. What started in the hotel room as a hunger for knowledge became an essential experience of God.

A few months later, while taking a test drive in a car with a salesperson, an impression came into my mind around the name Laura. While I tried to suppress it, it kept coming, so I asked the

salesperson, “Does the name Laura mean anything special to you?” He quickly said no, and we dropped it, but the impression came back stronger, so I inquired again. To which he blurted out “Did my dad put you up to this?” I told him I didn’t know his dad, and I wondered what was so special about Laura. Again, he blurted out, this time with tears, “She’s the mother of my daughter and I abandoned them two years ago and my father hasn’t spoken to me since.”

I pulled the car over so we could talk and learned that the father, a Baptist minister, had been very angry and the son was certain his father would never talk with him again. Then he became curious about what had caused me to ask about Laura. I said I didn’t know, but suspected God wanted him to know he is loved, and that his father still loved him. We concluded our drive and never met again. I knew about the Gifts of the Spirit, and when this happened other times, I realized that another Presence greater than me had acted.

While these experiences broke through day-to-day life and introduced me to another realm, the pressures of life mounted and soon I returned to old patterns.

A few years later, my adult son came to our home one night, in a terrified hyperactive state.

I called a therapist friend who helped us understand he was experiencing a psychotic break, so we hospitalized him. In the months that followed, I became “a take charge father,” certain there was a medical treatment that would heal him. His illness conflicted with the way I had imagined life would go. While my efforts were wrapped in a banner of “good father,” I see now that I mostly wanted life to return to normal and the stress in my marriage to dissipate. Nineteen years later, my understanding has changed.

The dynamics of family, friendships, and church changed. The stigma becomes the enemy not the disease. While those around me were kind, they felt awkward, and our church had no idea how to help. The Church as we knew it no longer worked and family stress and confusion became nearly unbearable.

After reading a Richard Foster book, I reviewed his endnotes and discovered that one of the most influential people in his life was John Main, a monk. I ordered a John Main book, and learned about “Christian” mediation, something no church had mentioned. In desperation, I immediately began twice-a-day 20-minute sits and was reconnected with the silence, mystery, and peace of my childhood.

No one understood what I was doing, but a few months into it Becky said, "I don't understand but keep it up, you are changing."


My son's illness was a catalyst, and I began to read every resource I could find. While the authors were becoming dear friends, I felt alone without physical community. That's when I was introduced to the leader of a small contemplative community who invited me to participate in a next day retreat. Within an hour of being with these loving people, I was gushing with tears of happiness. I felt home in a way I never had.

In a Visio Divina exercise, I was attracted to a small reddish cross. As I held it, the markings registered and I immediately understood that Christ was expressing His presence as fragrance and aroma, through me, into the world I was engaging. I

had clarity. Wherever I was, Christ was. This visual image became part of me and with that, work became spiritual, and I began to understand suffering as an enzyme that had been working throughout life to bring me back to awe, wonder, beauty, and mystery.

With our recent move to Austin and The Church of Conscious Harmony, I'm reminded that:

Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

This is my understanding of Being With – the revelation of our essential being through our bodies, attitudes and lives. 

JULY SERMON THEMES

TRANSFORMING PRACTICES

July 10	Noticing
July 17	Attending
July 23	Breathing
July 31	Postures and Gestures



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ELDER WISDOM: HONORING OUR FATHERS AND MOTHERS

EVOLUTION: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

BY PATSY FORDYCE

Over time, I've come to see that "transformation" implies "evolution." We are all very different and, fascinatingly to me, no two people can possibly be alike, right?

As they told me many times, my first experience of life was with an "incoming impression" of my beloved pediatrician father, who immediately took me to the Atlanta Piedmont Hospital's pay phone to call his Presbyterian parents in Montgomery, Alabama to announce my arrival! Being raised in that very large city by him and my pediatric nurse mother, I always felt welcomed, loved, safe and secure. I took for granted all the opportunities they gave me that they never had growing up during the Great Depression. While my own "three centers" – mind, feelings and body – were developing through all these "incoming impressions" and stimulations, I most enjoyed watching animals and birds do their own development.

Every summer, I visited my maternal Granny and Grandpa on their little South Alabama

farm where they had everything, including animals, corn fields, fig trees, a huge garden, old country store and outhouse. Sitting in the wicker rocking chair on the front porch shelling lima beans was my "psychological safe place." The tiny Methodist church established by my itinerant preacher great, great grandfather in the 1800s had a bell in the bell tower you rang by swinging and pulling hard on the long rope. Grandpa led the hymn singing and Granny taught a Bible class. Many family members are buried in our family plot at the old church cemetery.

I attended Presbyterian, Methodist, and Episcopalian churches and was introduced to vegetarianism/veganism, the Jesus Cult, "I'm OK, You're OK" Psychology, Madame Blavatsky, Mormon Church, Islam/Muslim, the Tarot, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Transcendental Meditation and literal Sun Worshipping spiritual concepts. I even swam on Emory College's swim team. Clearly, I was a "seeker." By the age of 18, graduating from high school, I felt

very old.

At 20 years old, I read Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and thereafter committed myself to my lifelong Evolution passion. Having been interested in and studied the evolution from dinosaurs to viruses to plants, life moved on to Vanderbilt University with the Creationism debate of Scopes' "Monkey Trial" and classes in zoology and biology. Soon thereafter came marriage and relocating to beautiful Arkansas, where the greatest joy of my life was raising our four fabulous children who inherited our environmental evolutionary interests. Very sadly, we recently lost the older two to severe illnesses. Now, am enjoying my next generations of grandsons and great grandchildren.

You have heard some of my history, what is yours?

Looking back, I was consumed by all these extraordinary incoming impressions. I was strongly "identified" and had absolutely no concept of "self-observation."

By the Grace of God when I was 40 years old, the imminent child psychiatrist John E. Peters

introduced me to G I. Gurdjieff's Work of Inner Christianity. The Work profoundly reveals that the "primary reason for Man's creation on earth is individual evolution" and "life is a school and its real meaning is that life is a means and not an end in itself."

After a divorce, I moved to Washington D.C. where I was in a large "school" led by Hugh Ripman, a student of Ouspensky and Gurdjieff. His wife was our Jeanne de Salzmann-trained sacred Movements teacher. Moving with Gurdjieff's amazing powerful music can be three centered and transforming! While living there, I attended the National Cathedral and the Sufi organization's meetings. In my 50s, I became a professional hypnotist where I spent hours teaching clients to get in touch with their normal "multiplicity" using Charles Tebbetts' Parts Therapy technique. I also became familiar with past life regressions and near-death experiences. As a seeker, I transitioned through teachings from the Holy Bible, Ram Dass, Carlos Castaneda, J.G. Bennett, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and others.

After 10 years, I moved to Austin because in addition to being closer to family, there was a local New York Foundation Gurdjieff group. Then, I discovered what I call "the only Gurdjieff Church in the world"

created by our beloved Tim and Barbara Cook. They introduced us to Fr. Thomas Keating and his Centering Prayer method and contemplative principals that became the primary force in my life, plus many authors including Byron Katie, David Hawkings, Bernadette Roberts, and Ilia Delio. Since they retired, my dear friend Peter Haas, whom I believe is the only person in the world who could have taken on their job, is continuing to pastor The Church of Conscious Harmony.

Our Journey School has taught me more in the last three years from Gurdjieff's Work than any or all of the many "schools" in which I have participated due to its skilled and dedicated leadership and fellow participants. Here are a few ideas that I find transformational. How do they resonate with you?

"When you begin to see the good of doing and living the Work, your 'being' begins to change. If you think from the ideas of the Work, you are no longer driven by life even though you may still be living in life. You must not think that you cannot work on a thing in your past. Never think that you cannot alter it. You can alter the past, present and the future." Maurice Nicoll

"Christ remains eternally present in every human being –past, present and to come. We

are all in the Body of Christ. ... 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." The Church of Conscious Harmony, *Statement of Belief*

"According to the Law of Three, once an impasse has constellated [identified], it can never be solved by going backwards but only forward on to that new arising that honors all the players and brings them into a new relationship, the three forces are like three strands in a braid, all three are required for the weaving." Cynthia Bourgault

"A man can neither pray nor 'Remember Himself' unless he feels there is both a higher state of himself and something higher than he is." Maurice Nicoll

"In the next stage of our collective evolution, it is that the hearts of individuals that will hold the cosmic note of the planet. This note can be recognized as a joyful song being born into the hearts of seekers." Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, *The Bond with the Beloved*

Evolution... Transformation... Come with me in this evolution! Going forward with God in the name of God Transcendent, God Omnipresent and God Immanent and Indwelling, the Holy Trinity. Amen. ☸

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

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

FOCUSING ON THE BREATH

BY NATHAN JONES

Work Idea: It is important to consider what it means to have a transforming practice. There appears to be a dearth of these in what Bernadette Roberts called the cult of Jesus. These practices can inform the individual, the journey, the Creator and the importance of regular attention. Let us consider the mechanical and conscious act of breathing. It is likely that each wisdom tradition speaks to the importance of observing and focusing on the breath. The Work is no different. Gurdjieff taught of the different scales and relationships breath has along the Ray of Creation. The different “Time of Breath” for cells, humans, organic life, the Earth and the Sun are all different yet interrelated. Once again illustrating “as above, so below.”

Work Source: “Time is breath –

try to understand this.” *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 213

Application: When things start to come fast, with people screaming and pieces of cars lying like lazy dogs there is a difference in mentation if the breath is fast or slow. Things deescalate when the breath slows – internally and externally. It feels by organizing my own interior, by slowing the breath, I can then impact my external surroundings. I can, to a greater extent, bring organization out of the chaos. While the measure of time beats the same, events begin to slow down. My literal experience is that time slows down. *By focusing on the breath an internal transformation is allowed to take place.*

When relaxed, our breathing slows down. Let us practice reversing this process – slowing down the breathing in order to

become more conscious of the moment and thereby relaxing. This is a practice we can use and observe its effectiveness.

How many times do you breathe in a day? I know we can call it once every 3-4 seconds and figure out the rough number. But how many times can you remember breathing in any given day. Today? Can you catch yourself breathing 100 times? I suspect it will happen.

Further Resource: “Surely, though, wouldn’t the winds have spread the breath so thin that nothing remained? ... So, while on some level (the human level) Jesus’s last breath does seem to have disappeared into the atmosphere, on a microscopic level his breath hasn’t disappeared at all, since the individual molecules that make it up still exist. (Despite how ‘soft’ air

COMMUNITY PRACTICE: WATERING PLANTS

July in Texas is a good time to pay attention to the living plants in your life, especially at dawn and dusk. Whether outdoors or indoors, take time to consciously, intentionally and lovingly water a plant or plants. If you don't already, try speaking to the plants. Share words of love, praise and gratitude as you water them. Notice how you feel as you are watering them. Bless the water before you water the plant. Speak words of love over the water. Give thanks for the water, and from where it comes.

seems, most air molecules are pretty hardy: the bonds that bind their atoms together are some of the strongest in nature.) So, in asking whether you just inhaled some of Jesus's last breath, I'm really asking whether you inhaled any *molecules* he happened to expel at that moment. ...

Is Jesus's final breath ... spilling too few molecules into the air to make a difference? Or is it ... making it a statistical certainty? Somewhere in between. Sort of like matter meeting anti-matter, the 25,000,000,000,000,000,000 molecules and the 0.00000000000000000001 percent almost exactly cancel each other out. When you crunch the numbers, you'll find that roughly

one particle of 'Jesus air' will appear in your next breath. That number might drop a little depending on what assumptions you make, but it's highly likely that you just inhaled some of the atoms Jesus used to say *why have you forsaken me*. And it's a *certainty* that, over the course of a day, you inhale thousands. Think about that. Across all that distance of time and space, a few of the molecules that danced inside his lungs are dancing inside you right now." Sam Kean, *Caesar's Last Breath*, p. 8-11

I have replaced the name of Caesar with Jesus in this text. Today you will inhale some of the molecules that he exhaled. Right, wrong or indifferent that appears to be just how it is. ☸

JULY CALENDAR

For more details, visit
<https://consciousharmony.org/>
or call 512-347-9673

SPECIAL EVENTS

Two-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
July 8-9 9am-3pm CDT online & in person
Two Legs & A Body led by Sharon Johnson
\$40 register online

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
July 23 9am-3pm
Song & Silence led by Beverly McCune
\$15 register online

MONTHLY

Caritas Donations
1st Sundays
Bring non-perishables to CCH or
donate to caritasofaustin.org

WEEKLY

Sundays
†Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am
*Intercessory Prayer 9am
†Worship Service 10-11:30am
Youth Program (preK-12) 10-11:30am

Wednesdays
†Contemplative Worship Service 6-7pm

Thursdays
*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

Saturdays
*Scriptorium noon

DAILY

Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

*Please join via internet; links are on our website.
†In person and online.



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THE GRACE OF ORDINARY TIME



Layne Adams, *The Christ Within*

*For you have died,
and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Colossians 3:3

The dynamism of the Easter mystery
is at the heart of the Christian faith. ...
The Resurrection is not a doctrine we try to prove
or a problem we argue about:
it is the life and action of Christ ...
in us by his Holy Spirit.
A Christian bases his entire life on these truths.
His entire life is changed by the presence
and the action of the Risen Christ.
He knows he has encountered the Risen Christ,
as Paul encountered him on the road to Damascus.
Such an encounter does not have to be dramatic,
but it has to be personal and real. ...
True encounter with Christ ...
awakens something in the depth of our being,
something we did not know was there.
True encounter with Christ liberates something in us,
a power we did not know we had, a hope, a capacity for life,
a resilience, an ability to bounce back
when we thought we were completely defeated,
a capacity to grow and change,
a power of creative transformation.

Thomas Merton, *He is Risen*