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The Mark

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



LOOKING DEEPER



Holy, holy, holy ... the whole earth is filled with God's glory! Isaiah 6:3

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY REMEMBERING

LOOKING DEEPER

BY PETER HAAS

If I wish to go further,
I need to be shocked, shaken, by
seeing the selfish reaction
of my ego, defending itself
out of fear of being denied.
In order to be free from this fear,
I have to experience it,
to wholly live
with everything it entails.

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

The first and highest level of
creation is produced by the three
forces of the Trinity ...

Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, "Man's
Situation on Earth," August 11, 1945

*Be transformed by the renewal
of your minds ...*

Romans 12:2

Our theme last month was Looking Up. This month we turn the other way, so to speak, focusing on Looking In, with the sense of looking deeper. Deeper into our being. Deeper into reality. Deeper into wisdom. In our experience, looking up and looking in are two aspects of Holy Remembering.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe begins his masterpiece of human nature, *Faust*, with the character Mephistopheles admitting to the Lord and the Angels of the heavenly court, that he, Mephistopheles, knows little of cosmology, yet much of human psychology. In his memorable words:

Of suns and worlds, I can
shed little light;
I see but humans, and their
piteous plight.

We may not be adepts at cosmology, but we each are experts in our favorite subject: ourselves.

Add on our all too human plight(s) and oh, what to do!

As a remedy to our various human plights and as a reminder of our possibilities as well, nearly every spiritual tradition invites us to deepen our knowledge of self. Not in the way of a narcissus, who falls in love with himself/herself. Rather in the way of the butterfly, the way of transformation and metamorphosis, by way of letting go of the old and receiving the new.

The ancient Temple of Delphi famously maintained inscriptions at its entrance, two of which read: "Know thyself" and "Nothing too much." This wise pairing reminds us that even knowledge of ourselves needs to be yoked with moderation. All things in balance: look in and look up. Take a measured approach to change, little by little. When combined, looking up and looking in, we are reminded that we humans

are uniquely blessed, created in the image and likeness of God, and not the center of the universe. We are parts of the cosmic whole.

How We Can Look Deeper In

Let's review the two primary ways we experience looking deeper. The first is a regular practice of meditative prayer. Our chosen method is Centering Prayer, and we encourage everyone to cultivate a twice-daily Centering Prayer practice, morning and evening. We also encourage experiencing silence and prayer in community on regular daily or extended retreats.

The method of Centering Prayer, like most meditative methods, often orientates one's awareness within, toward one's breath, one's heart and one's embodied stillness. In the practice of Centering Prayer, we begin to do this by returning to our sacred word when we notice that we are engaged with our thoughts or sensations. This simple gesture of consent, returning to our sacred word, often leads us to wider and undisturbed interior spaces of stillness and silence.

One common fruit of this interior stillness and silence can be a quality of inner knowing, a kind of inner seeing of something about oneself, or simply an intimation or intuition. Such seeing or knowing can lead to the spiritual fruit of understanding or wisdom, regarding oneself or others, and even sometimes the spiritual gift of revelation about our relationship

with the larger story of God, cosmos, life or self.

If you need guidance or wisdom in a particular area of your life, or if there's a dynamic with someone you are in relationship with, consider deepening your practice of Centering Prayer. Let the stillness and silence of the practice curate in you. Let the grace of the Holy Spirit's presence and action reveal a key new insight for your next step.

The second way we experience looking deeper is the Work of Inner Christianity's primary practice of self-observation. One of the first liberating moments on the spiritual journey is realizing and experiencing that there is a distinct part of you that is seeing what it sees, and that interior part of you is not what's seen. This observer, and the observing, is not the observed.

This practice immediately creates an initial inner separation between observed and observer. That's not to say that the two are dramatically interrelated, they often are, sometimes to dysfunctional levels. Nevertheless, the act of observing alone, and feeling the contrast between that in you that sees and that which is seen is powerful. This lets the light of consciousness in to such an extent that sometimes just the light alone does healing and liberating work within us.

Related to both aforementioned practices, in the realm of our unconscious life, our nighttime dreams are also a good place to

look within, to look deeper. The key to self-study of our dreams is, upon waking after a dream, write down as much as possible of what you remember of the dream. Then ponder what it might be speaking to you about. Ask for the gift of insight and understanding as you ponder your dream; and perhaps share your dream with a trusted friend, conversing about its meaning(s).

Deeper

In conclusion, it might be helpful to say more about what we mean by the word deeper. The etymology of the English word deep comes from the Hebrew *tehome* and *amok*, the Greek *bathos*, and the Latin *de Profundis*.

The power of the depths to overwhelm and also to be the place of encounter and help can be heard in the majestic poetry of Psalm 130:

*Out of the depths I cry to
you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.*

The point that wishes to arise for our attention here is that the depths isn't just a place. It's an inner state or experience that transforms us. It reveals more of our own being to our inner seeing and often is the place we encounter the Ground of our Being, to which we cry out for help and mercy, praise or thanksgiving.

The Hebrew word used in Psalm

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

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

REMEMBERING REALITY BY MIMI CONROY

“As it is, we have a marvelous inner source of negative emotions and general unhappiness. So work—real, practical and hard work—against negative emotions, by non-identifying with them, not consenting to them, not going with them, not believing them, separating the feeling of ‘I’ from them—is necessary.”

Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, p. 1081

In the *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, Maurice Nicoll reminds us often that this teaching is the inner psychological meaning of Christ’s teaching, that is, Esoteric Christianity. The promise of The Kingdom of Heaven or Conscious Circle of Humanity within us all. By my Work and efforts may I one day contribute to the evolution of our Solar system? The liberation from our false personality is the big ticket item because the Holy Spirit fills the void. Ah, but at what cost is this void? It costs me all and everything.

I am reminded often of Tim

Cook’s response to me when I came to the end of my being and faced the unknown. “It’s time to reach for the rope,” he said with a smile to which he added, “God loves you very much.” Then, with a sparkle in his eyes, he opened his door and hugged me goodbye. Leaving Tim’s office emboldened by his encouragement and good humor, I perched on the precipice of my crumbling ‘I’s. Not knowing beyond this moment, I remember to bring the Work to this fear of the unknown and the rope appears. Just out of reach. Now is the time to Will and step out while reaching for a promise of evolution I can

hardly begin to know. The ideas and words of the Work are filled with tough love and power; and for us a beautiful map of consciousness all the while reminding us to verify everything for ourselves. Here’s something so beautiful and filled with Objective consciousness; now go and prove it to yourself.

I know now that the Work was alive in me from a young age. I remember Observing ‘I’ like an invisible friend, always there like my breath. So when I met the system of the Work, I began to drink deeply, learning the basics one at a time embedded in Maurice Nicoll’s *Commentaries*. Words

transcribed by Beryl Pogson as he taught his groups in England, words that speak truer to me as I age. Like the idea of myself being a multiplicity, that I am not a unity filled with harmony but a multiplicity filled with disharmony in my sleeping state. My illusion of always being conscious took a level blow. If I suffer consciously, something changes. This is the beginning of Real I that feeds on conscious shock and fear. Having a well-developed personality, it turns out, gives one currency to spend in this process. This was good news to me. I clearly had a developed personality and grew up scrappy.

The next and very important teaching came to suggest I “never” justify or explain. This one had me realizing it would be best if I just shut up, as I was already explaining and justifying to myself why this would be impossible. Realizing with self-observation that ‘I’ was constantly explaining myself or justifying my negative behavior, I froze realizing for the first time what Gurdjieff meant by the “terror of the situation.” Self-justifying is a complicated process of inner and outer lying where we put ourselves in the right light. This was when I found out some really humbling news, that while new to me, my friends and family knew this negative behavior very well. They had been bearing me long before I

began to bear myself and I might add they accepted and loved me anyway, which was lost on me.

The Work asks us over and over to Work on ourselves, to Work over our own bones. Verify everything. My life is my teacher. This gives us a banquet of buffers and projections that have us working on others in a very negative way. What I am not conscious of in myself, I inflict on others. This is where the opportunity comes to self-observe, non-identify and draw the feeling *from* the negativity and breathe in the sensation of self-remembering. Now, I might externally consider another. This is the love of the Work and the promise of evolution. My observation has deepened to include this question, “When I am identified with my inner state and observe it, am I still identified?” This gives me a chance to go deeper in myself, higher in scale. Which brings me back to my childhood experience of a benevolent friend the Work runs deep in my being and mostly *works* me. I Work now for permanence and have come to a place of peace within this Cosmos called Mimi. When I Work, I Wish to work with a lightness and humor that our beloved Uncle Maurice thought to importantly include on page ten in volume one of the *Commentaries*. Thank you Maurice with all my heart! ☺

continued from page 3

130 is *amok*, which sounds just like the English word we often use when we say that the ship has run amuck. It conveys a notion of getting stuck, losing center, getting off balance, caught in identification or the swings of life. Living uncontrolled or frenzied, caught in the unconscious current of fate and a sleep walking life.

In contrast, while we might be uncomfortable with what we discover in the depths of our being, the depths are also the place of our encounter with help that changes us so profoundly that we are never the same. The Presence awaits us in the depths. Holy Remembering awaits us in the depths. As the Psalmist beautifully expresses it, moments later in Psalm 139:

*Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens,
you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths,
you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, “Surely the darkness
will hide me
and the light become night
around me,”
even the darkness will not be
dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you. ☺*

But whenever you pray, go into your inner room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:6

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF CENTERING PRAYER

STILLNESS AND SENSATION BY JILL FRANK

Centering Prayer is a path to the inner room, to the stable, solid core that is our basic core of goodness and the ground of our Being. Each day, each moment, each breath is an opportunity to bear this goodness into the world. These bodies, our vessels for a time, are created in the image of God and God is love. How can I be a conduit of God's love? I need access to the inner room, the mountain, where Jesus went regularly to commune with the Beloved. I need to establish a path, a new neural network, a groove of perpetual access and traverse it regularly. I Wish to integrate the breath, sensation, image and word as a practice and experience the state of alert receptivity, an active state, alive with vibration and flow. A practice of awakening the body to this state, allows a more active engagement in relationship with Divine Presence. I practice coming to this state to enter the inner room, I practice ever-so-gently returning to this state every time the door blows open during prayer. I practice

walking this state into the day with a Wish to remember and a three-centered memory of integration and flow. Higher and lower, human and divine.... I Wish for this integration within and without, in prayer and in life.

In the Aramaic language, the language that Jesus spoke, the word for prayer means "to open oneself" and "to listen to the Divine Presence." In Fr. Thomas Keating's book *Open Mind, Open Heart*, the second guideline states, "Our basic core of goodness is our true Self. Its center of gravity is God. The acceptance of our basic goodness is a quantum leap in the spiritual journey." This basic core of goodness is capable of unlimited development, indeed of becoming transformed in Christ.

Prepare is the first step of any process. In the morning, I prepare by practicing embodiment with word, gesture, posture and attitude going into the prayer and arising from the prayer. Inhaling: I collect and draw in, feeling "I." Exhaling:

I release and surrender all to God, sensing "AM." The attitude is one of consent and allowing. I sense this in the body. Jesus on the cross; arms wide open, heart exposed is the attitude manifest in the body. Arms up, inhaling, I speak out, "Oh God, thank you for the gift of another day." I sense the stretch upward vertical and a grounding of my feet firmly rooted and grounded on Mother Earth. I experience an energetic channel opening and flowing in and through as I exhale. Inhaling with arms out wide, "I open to all my brothers and sisters, all creatures great and small, in Christ love and compassion." I sense the energy flowing outward, the expansion and openness in the chest and exhale. I pause and sense the spaciousness of an open heart and imagine drawing the breath in from a space in front of the chest. I feel it flowing through the heart and vision releasing it through the back and out the other side to a space behind my body. Now I inhale, drawing air in from behind the chest, again

drawing it through the heart and exhaling in front of the body. I create a memory of this sensation of heart breath, of openness and flow.

I Wish to embody consent. We follow the template of Jesus, aiming for Christ; the embodied intersection of human and divine. Am I willing to be this little cell in the body of Christ? With arms stretched forward and open palms, the embodiment practice continues, “I give you all that I am and all that I have.” Palms remaining open, I draw my arms to the chest inhaling, “I open to receive the gifts you have in store for me this day, may I know them as such.”

What if I could see not only the external things that cross my path this day, but all the unruly thoughts, emotions, distractions as gifts of energy to be transformed for God’s use? What if I use them as an opportunity to Re-member; to embody, to allow Spirit’s action? Can I imagine? Can I feel and sense the flow of giving and receiving with the inhalation and exhalation?

Pausing, I practice sensing the vibrations of this Wish as I breathe.

From Psalm 46:10, I remember a simple invitation from our Creator, *Be still and know that I am*. I connect with this truth, consciously visioning, sensing, feeling, and breathing the stillness of the inner room. Inhaling “I” and exhaling “AM,” bending forward with arms extended forward: “I bow down to mother earth in awe, reverence and gratitude and vow to care well for her this day.” I place my head on the floor. Putting the head down, releasing its need to control, sensing freedom as the heart rises and falls with the breath. I pause and rest in child pose, creating a muscle memory and vision of this position to return to, each time “it” wants to react.

“To live silence, to know ... I need to come to the sensation of a void, empty of all my imaginary projections ... I do not seek to fill the void ... I seek silence ... This inner silence means abandon and submission. My ordinary ‘I’ submits,

and my mind is freer” Jeanne de Salzmann, *The Reality of Being*

Centering Prayer invites us to go into our inner room and close the door regularly with the intention of simply consenting to God’s presence and action and love. Our practice twice daily is creating a path to the inner room. We prepare our bodies as we would for a special date with a friend, not dragging our sleepy bodies to the door. Rather in great anticipation, feeling and sensing our aim in the cells of the body and drawing them into relationship. “Oh boy, I get to sit with my Beloved.” When I’m in a relationship, spending time with the One I love, and sense that I’m being sucked out, distracted with a thought, a feeling, a sound, I Wish to return. My sacred word, which is connected with my breath, serves as an anchor to the inner room and ever-so-gently draws me home. Fr. Keating likens our sacred word to an arrow pointing in the direction you want to go.

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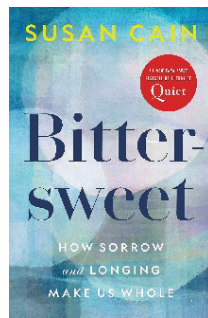
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Practice creates a path to the core, a new neural groove that becomes more natural over time.

Each time we return to our sacred word, we open and allow the Spirit to affirm our basic core of goodness. Gradually the unconscious obstacles to a deeper relationship with God and others become passive! Jesus returned to “the mountain” regularly to connect and commune with his Father and to remember his aim. I rise, standing upright, sensing feet grounded with arms at sides, and palms open forward, breathing. Standing in mountain pose, I sense inner stillness and vibrations of alert receptivity, “Lift me into this day as your vehicle of divine life, light and love.” This is my aim.

From Madame de Salzmann, “We are seeking to approach the unknown, to open the door to what is hidden in us.” Centering Prayer is a path to live from the depths of the inner room; we begin and end our days opening the door, and Wish to move through life, grounded and connected within and without. I practice daily in order “to be able” to pause and remember to access the stillness that is always present. I pray that someday the pause will vanish and I will live in a state of Holy Remembering. Meanwhile, the process continues, placing hands to chest in prayer pose, “May I remember and serve you completely.” Amen. ☸

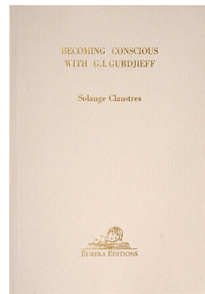
COMMUNITY READING: JAN-APR



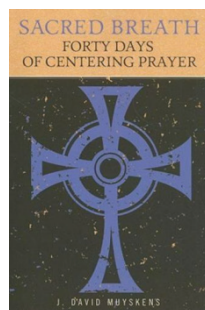
This year we aim to focus on three community readings, allowing us time to go deeper into each one. The first is Susan Cain’s masterful book, *Bittersweet*. Cain is better known for her first book *Quiet*, celebrating the gift of contemplative life, and the importance of silence and stillness in today’s world.

In *Bittersweet*, Cain explores the power of human longing, especially as it relates to all the aspects of our life that have been touched by sadness, loss and grief. As we do our inner Work, these wounded places can become very fruitful. In a culture that celebrates instant gratification, there is wisdom in the gift of Holy Longing that helps us remember what is truly meaningful in a lifetime of complex choices and diverse possibilities. ☸

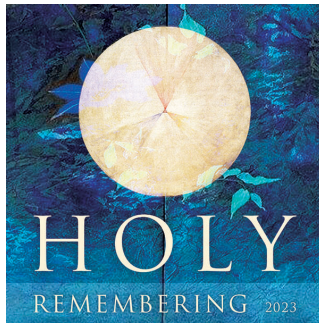
BOOK LOOK: GURDJIEFF AND SILENCE



Becoming Conscious with G.I. Gurdjieff by Solange Claustres is a very helpful first-hand account of life with Mr. Gurdjieff and his Paris teachings in the 1940s. Accounts written by Gurdjieff’s female students are valuable counter balances to the other more well-known accounts from Gurdjieff’s students such as Ouspensky, Orage and Nicoll.



J. David Muyskens’ *Sacred Breath* is a lovely resource for pairing Centering Prayer and the Lenten Journey. If you are looking for a companion reader for Lent, explore this integrating and wise book of meditative, embodied practices. ☸



2023 Aim: HOLY REMEMBERING 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 into:

- ✘ renewing your intention and will to God,
- ✘ participating in a year dedicated to “Holy Remembering,” and
- ✘ moving 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 each month to support a focused study of the aim. This month, we reflect and look deeper at “Looking Deeper,” while last month’s theme was “Looking Up.”

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

- Engage with the The Journey School’s weekly curriculum and Thursday evening class
- Create a daily practice, which may include Centering Prayer, Scripture, and conscious movement (tai chi, yoga, or walking)
- Study and apply the ideas of the Work of Inner Christianity
- Attend a Eucharistic worship service
- Attend church offerings, groups and classes
- Meet with the minister, abbess, or minister’s designate for spiritual companionship
- Intentional volunteer service for our Church community, join a committee or team such as Sunday Seva, Youth Education, Centering Prayer, Floral, A/V, etc.
- Attend Centering Prayer retreats
- Tithe

Please prayerfully consider any or all of these offerings, which are available throughout the year.

More information about The Journey School is online at consciousnessharmony.org.

To learn more about the 2023 annual aim “Holy Remembering”

or to participate and receive a beautiful packet of the monthly themes, please contact the Church office. ☎

COMMUNITY PRACTICE

JAN-FEB

LEARN TWO NAMES OF WINTER CONSTELLATIONS

This winter, our monthly community practice continues in support of Looking Deeper and Holy Remembering. We are invited to look up and identify two winter constellations. Remember their names or simply name them yourself. As you gaze upon them, connect with them. Nurture a relationship with them! Speak to them. Listen to them. Watch for their arising and turning across the sky. Even their disappearance as the night fades to light. 🌌

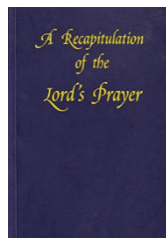
SERMON SERIES

HOLY REMEMBERING

- Feb 5 Holy Forces
- Feb 12 Holy Transformation
- Feb 19 Holy Help
- Feb 22 Ash Wednesday
Noon & 6:00pm Service
(Both services will be in person and livestreamed)
- Feb 26 A Holy Lent: Take and Receive Rest

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES

New Class: Living the Lord's Prayer in Lent
Wednesdays, February 22-March 29



JESUS WAS PRAYING in a certain place. When he ceased, one of his disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1). Jesus replied directly with the Lord's Prayer, which was far more than a technique. Christ bestowed on his disciples something infinitely greater and more wonderful than what they had asked for.

Join us on Wednesday evenings from 7:00-8:15 p.m. for a deep exploration into the spiritual, esoteric, and Work connections and meanings within The Lord's Prayer. Our primary resource will be the book, *A Recapitulation of the Lord's Prayer*. This online-only class will be facilitated by Peter Haas and Mary Anne Best. Please register through consciousharmony.org, a \$60 donation is suggested.

Men's Pre-Lenten Centering Prayer Retreat
February 17-18

Co-led by Peter Haas and Guy Yeadon, this in-person men's retreat begins Friday, February 17th from 7:00-8:30 p.m. and continues Saturday, February 18th from 8:30 a.m.-noon at The Church of Conscious Harmony. Please join us as we prepare to enter the Lenten Journey. This retreat is designed to support the spiritual journey of men who wish to deepen their God devotion in the way of Christ. The aim of the retreat is to expand our freedom from addictions and feel reconnected with the Divine Love of Beloved Source, our foundation and strength, our unfading north star for all aspects of our life's journey, whether victories or defeats, highs or lows, dark nights or radiant days. For registration and more details, go to consciousharmony.org. A \$15 donation is suggested.

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson Reading Group
Mondays, Feb 6-May 22 7-8:15pm Zoom only
Facilitated by Robin Bloor Open to all Register online \$160

Introduction to Centering Prayer Class
Feb 11 9am-noon at CCH and online
Includes 4 consecutive sessions, Mondays 7-8pm
Register online \$15

One-Day Centering Prayer Online Retreat
Feb 11 9am-3pm
Register online

Men's 2-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Fri, Feb 17, 7-8:30pm & Sat, Feb 18, 8:30am-noon
In-person only Register online \$15 suggested donation

Living the Lord's Prayer in Lent (online only)
Wednesdays, Feb 22-Mar 29 7-8:15pm
Register online \$60

MONTHLY

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

WEEKLY

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

Wednesdays
❖ Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm

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

DAILY

†Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am
*Centering Prayer 6pm

*Please join these services, groups, and classes via online video options.
Contact the website for accessible links and more information.
†In person and online ❖In-person only at CCH



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Temptation of Christ, J. Kirk Richards

*The willing is ready at hand, but doing the good is not.
For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want.*

*Now if I do what I do not want,
it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.
... For I take delight in the law of God, in my inner self,
but I see in my members another principle at war
with the law of my mind, taking me captive to the law of sin
that dwells in my members. Miserable one that I am!*

*Who will deliver me from this mortal body?
Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Romans 7:18-25

LENT

The struggle between the old and the new self is a constant theme in the New Testament. The false self easily adjusts to the circumstances of the spiritual journey as long as it does not have to change itself. Thus, it manifests its radical self-centeredness in various expressions of human activity: in material pursuits such as wealth and power; in emotional satisfactions such as relationships; in intellectual goals ... in social goals ... in religious aspirations ... and even in spiritual commitments such as prayer, the practice of virtue and every form of ministry. ... No amount of theological, scriptural or liturgical study can heal the false-self system, because as long as our emotional programs for happiness are firmly in place, such studies are easily co-opted by them.

The heart of the Christian asceticism – and the work of Lent – is to face the unconscious values that underlie the emotional programs for happiness and to change them.

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*

