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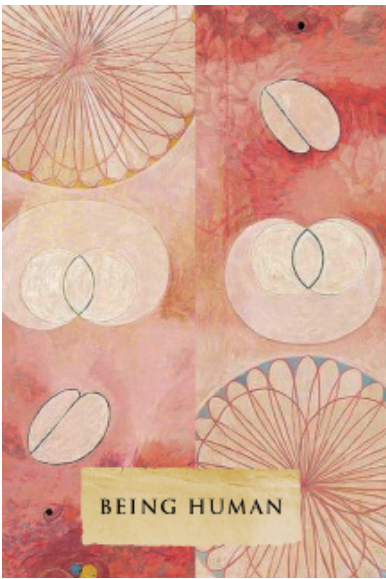


# The Mark

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



BEING HUMAN



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

## ANNUAL AIM: HOLY REMEMBERING

BEING HUMAN AND HUMAN LOVE BY PETER HAAS

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The Work teaches  
that every “I”  
has its own will  
so as you move seamlessly from  
one “I” to another,  
your will moves with each “I.”

In reality,  
your will is fragmented,  
temporary and  
sometimes contradictory.

There are also  
larger and smaller wills  
among your multiplicity of wills.  
Some of them last long enough  
for you to accomplish  
your daily tasks, or maybe not,  
and some of them last long  
enough to build cathedrals, create  
great music  
and beautiful art.  
Nevertheless,  
they are all temporary.

Rebecca Nottingham,  
*The Work, Esotericism and Psychology*

*What is man that you are mindful of him,  
woman that you should care for her?  
Yet you have made them little less than gods,  
created them with glory and honor.*

Psalm 8:5-6

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Our Holy Remembering theme this year is proving to be fruitful. For example, I’ve been exploring an aspect of remembering that intersects with my relationship with my younger brother. The season of Lent often provides time and space for the arising of something that needs to be healed, and this Lent has proven once again that there is often more to see in my being than I realized.

During the three-day Lenten retreat this year, a question arose in my heart that deeply convicted me, and then opened an extended conversation within myself about

my lifetime and way of being. In my journaling and reflecting, I have seen how this lone, powerful question intersected with every aspect of my life, including my chief feature, and my present unfolding. The question that arose was:

Have you ever really  
loved your brother?

This question captures the essence of being human with other human beings. It harkens back to the early story of Cain and Abel. God asks Cain where his brother is and Cain replies, *am I my brother's keeper?* The question connects with Jesus' teaching when he instructed

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that we are to ask forgiveness of our brother and love our brother.

As I pondered this question, and surveyed my lifetime, another question began to arise in my heart. I am living into these questions as a way of Holy Remembering, and I share them here as a way of reporting what it's like for me to be a human.

And so, I was grasped by the power of this second question, which I heard in my heart very clearly:

Have you ever really  
loved anyone?

This question is perhaps the most powerful question I have heard so far on my spiritual journey. It is perhaps the quintessential question for all human beings and all ways of being human.

Answering these powerful questions hinges on what we mean by love. What is the standard to measure love? What are the actions or marks of love that would confirm or reveal if in fact one has been loving? A primary answer can be found when we turn to St. Paul's teaching on love recorded in 1 Corinthians chapter thirteen.

There, thirteen qualities are listed that, taken together, not only define love, but also set the template for measuring one's likeness to love. These qualities can help us all answer the questions: Have I ever

really loved my brother? Or anyone?

By way of review, here are the thirteen qualities:

Love is patient.

Love is kind.

Love does not envy.

Love does not boast.

Love is not proud.

Love does not dishonor others.

Love is not self-seeking.

Love is not easily angered.

Love keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil.

Love rejoices in the truth.

Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres.

Love never fails.


By this standard, it's unlikely that I have ever loved completely. Perhaps I have mostly loved, but rarely can I recall a time when I completely fulfilled all of these qualities all the time toward one, two, three or all the people in my life.

Perhaps the most truthful thing I can say about being human is that we are in the incomplete process of learning how to love more completely.

The last scene of the Norman Mclean novel, *A River Runs Through It*, concludes his story, reflecting on his sons, two brothers, with the beautiful phrase, "We can

love completely without complete understanding." This phrase is set into a larger context of how sometimes it is impossible to help our brother or sister, but we can love them. Mclean writes:

"Each one of us here today will at one time in our lives look upon a loved one who is in need and ask the same question: We are willing to help, Lord, but what, if anything, is needed? For it is true we can seldom help those closest to us. Either we don't know what part of ourselves to give or, more often than not, the part we have to give is not wanted. And so, it is those we live with and should know who elude us. But we can still love them – we can love completely without complete understanding."

In the near future, I will be reaching out to my brother to ask him to forgive me for anything I have ever said or done that was unloving. And to share that I do love him – his being and his essence – and I do see his beauty, truth and goodness. I have an aim to communicate more frequently with my brother, and in so doing, be more human. Just a man who knows he has not loved completely, but who is willing to try, more and more. 

## REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

SELF-REMEMBERING BY CAREN BETZ

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I came to the Work of Inner Christianity in 2000 through an invitation from a friend already studying it at The Church of Conscious Harmony. The insights offered to me were eye opening, even life changing. I'll give more information about the event that helped me begin my journey shortly, but the aftermath was one of insatiable curiosity and hunger for more. That's when I began my study and personal application of the Work. To paraphrase one of the ideas that has stuck with me is "to know much, you need to know very little." It always comes back to self-observation, non-identification, and self-remembering. And this year we are focusing on Holy Remembering. Why? Because it is important.

It is important enough that Dr. Maurice Nicoll dedicated many lessons on the subject

in the *Commentaries*. In the index, four and one-half pages of listings are under the topic of "self-remembering," and there are 15 separate Commentaries that focus on self-remembering.

It is important because as Madame Jeanne de Salzmann says in *The Reality of Being*, "We do not realize how passive we are, always pulled by events, people and things. ... so I lose myself, the feeling of myself."

It is important.

So, what is self-remembering and how do I know I am doing it? Self-Remembering is a practice, but more than that, it is a state. Self-remembering is a state of Grace in which our personality does not exist. There is remarkable freedom, if only momentary. The Work of Inner Christianity is to "know thyself," so who am I remembering? I recall on a Thursday night long ago when we were asked, "Which 'I' are

you remembering?" That means the first step is self-observation – I need to know my 'I's. What am I? I am a multiplicity slowly increasing her understanding. As I recognize my mechanicality more, I can separate from it and truly see that it is "not I." That is when self-remembering can lift me up above life's dramas and my unconscious reactions. I self-remember with all three of my centers. There are writings that call self-remembering a "sacred activity" In *Higher Being Bodies*, Ocke de Boer explains,

"... we need different states of consciousness. We need to remember that all work tools and ideas are there to help us to learn to live in higher states of consciousness. We therefore need to apply these ideas in our lives. Self-observation and self-remembering are both to

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be practiced as a sacrifice and as a service. Self-remembering can teach us to go straight through the weakness of the moment by learning when to be active, when to be passive and when to meditate.”

It’s a gift of Grace to have a moment of not being identified with yourself. Practicing this over and over introduces us to our true essence as children of God.

There was an event mentioned earlier that introduced me to the Work of Inner Christianity. I sought advice from a work friend about how to survive this anticipated difficult experience. This was also my Work friend (and now longtime Work partner), who advised me to go into this difficult event as if I was reviewing a movie. Utilizing this advice, I experienced glorious separation and a chance to see I had choices of response. My mechanical response would have been me, reduced to a puddle of tears, taking on all the unkind and untrue things said to me and about me. But as a “reviewer of a film” I could ask questions,

point out incorrect statements, and in the end ask this person if, in fact, they could work with me. I had believed that this was to have been a termination talk, but because I did not mechanically react, it was changed. And I was changed. I can experience that over and over, which I understand is one of the powers of “I wish to Work.”

Later I realized this event that I had experienced gave me several “fruits of my labor.” First, was a true understanding (which is defined as three-centered knowledge applied to Being) of “not I.” It was visceral. It was freeing. It was magnificent. It is now a state to which I can return to at any time. Second, it showed me in that moment of separation, I had choices. I was shown I am not, nor do I need to be, a prisoner of mechanical habits. And yet, I am. So, like washing my hair – lather, rinse, repeat – I return to self-observation, non-identification and self-remembering. All of my Work is to develop my ability to self-remember.

Recently, I was flying back from visiting grandchildren out

of state. Unmistakable Second Force seemed to try to thwart my return home. At one point, I had 15 minutes to make a connection. That was when I lost myself in imagination – I will never make it to that flight. But as I felt the anxiety rising, the Work came to me. I took a deep breath and remembered “All is well.” I’ll make the connection, or I won’t (truly a First World problem, no?). Then it became a matter of ‘I wonder how this will turn out?’ If I believe all is well, then all is well. If I believe all things work for good for those who love God, then all things work for my good. It is the state of self-remembering that metaphorically lifts me up above the drama that allows me to see this truth.

In true gratitude for, as Dr. Nicoll says, “long tedious years” (or rather long Work-filled years), I know that I am never done embodying self-remembering. Nothing is wasted in the Work, so all my intentions to self-remember add to my consciousness. There is always help! Oh Lord come to my assistance. Oh God make haste to help me. Help me to remember You. ☺



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*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 SILENCE BY KATHLEEN LITTLEPAGE

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“Centering Prayer, insofar as it puts us at God’s disposal, is a kind of request that He take our purification in hand. Courage is needed to face up to the process of self-knowledge, but it is the only way of getting in touch with our true identity and ultimately with our true Self, which is the image of God within us.”

Fr. Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*

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Centering Prayer saved my life. When I was 50, I had what Brené Brown calls a breakthrough/breakdown. I had some extraordinary experiences and an existential crisis. I had psychological disturbances that I didn’t understand and sought help from many sources: medical, psychological, spiritual, energetic body work, yoga, and so on. After the initial crisis passed, I came to understand that if every day I sat quietly for 45 minutes or longer with the intention of being open to God’s healing that it would stabilize

me. That message arrived in such a profound way that I couldn’t doubt it. I had been faithful to that practice for a while when I heard about Centering Prayer, which brought me to The Church of Conscious Harmony. I was startled by Fr. Thomas Keating’s clear precise explanations of exactly what I was experiencing in the practice that I thought was both unique and beyond explanation.

I attended an Introduction to Centering Prayer class and joined a Centering Prayer group. Right

after that, CCH showed all of Fr. Keating’s original video series. I have never watched anything so intently. I was familiar with meditation, but what I was hearing about developing a relationship with God in the silence was all new. My freshman year in college, I took a Transcendental Meditation (TM) course. That summer I went to a mediation retreat with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. A few years later, I learned of “morning sittings” in the Gurdjieff Work. But I didn’t use either technique consistently over

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the next 30 years. I appreciated the value of sitting in silence to quiet my mind and body, but what I discovered in Centering Prayer was entirely new and so much richer. I had never known silence as prayer nor stillness as opening to Grace, until I came to believe like John of the Cross that “Silence is God’s first language.”

My more than two decades of Centering Prayer have shaped my spiritual growth and psychological wellbeing more than anything else and more than I can pay homage to in words. I switched to prayer periods of at least 30 minutes twice a day. One year when I had a particularly challenging job, I went to a one-day silent retreat every month. Those respites gave me the force I needed to keep going. I attended as many multi-day silent retreats as I could. I feared ten-day retreats, but worked my way up to them and found the magic in longer stretches of silence and deeper levels of stillness. I was blessed to go to St. Benedict’s Monastery in Snowmass for several long retreats. I became a commissioned Centering Prayer presenter.

The essence of Centering

Prayer is experiential. I love the orderly beauty of the theological constructs; but only practice (and more practice) leads to experiencing God’s unconditional love, the effects of Divine Therapy, my core of goodness, attention of the heart and more. While I can’t express anything better than what has been written about Centering Prayer by Fr. Keating, Cynthia Bourgeault, David Frenette, and others, I can share three principles that helped me stay with and live into my daily practice:

1. Something is happening even when it seems like it isn’t. I know a few dedicated souls who get up and run every morning. Sometimes it is exhilarating and sometimes they are tired, or it is cold, drizzly, or hot. The overall benefit to their health and wellbeing is not the quality of any one run; it is their running practice. So it is with Centering Prayer. What happens in my prayer today doesn’t matter; what matters is that I did it and will do it tomorrow. Perseverance is everything.

2. More than one thing is happening simultaneously. TM teaches to perceive thoughts as

bubbles rising underwater and to watch them pass without reaching out. Fr. Keating visualizes thoughts as boats floating on the surface of a river and cautions us not to climb aboard. The water images are perfect because they have movement on the surface along with the unknown depths, and both images place the observer in the depths. As those random distracting thoughts float by I am simultaneously and mysteriously engaged at a deep level with Grace. This is a surrender practice.

3. Don’t believe everything you think. A Centering Prayer practice brings spiritual gifts and a bonus life skill. When I began to develop the ability to let thoughts pass by without engaging, I became aware of what strange notions come out of my mechanical mind. By carrying that into my waking life, I can question a thought. What? Am I sure I really think that? What junk pile did that come from? Unloading of the unconscious is one of the healing aspects of the practice. Fr. Keating advises not to examine the garbage before tossing it out.

Centering Prayer is at the heart of my well-being and my spiritual

*continued from page 7*

journey. Regular practice brings me a contentment and lightness of being. Observing my own version of the human condition up close nurtures compassion for myself and others. Cynthia Bourgeault describes an effect of a sustained practice: “Even as you go about your daily activities, you can sense it as a deeper life tugging and fluttering within you, reminding you of the greater life to which you belong. Centering Prayer is well named in this respect, because its most powerful physiological effect is that it will tend to develop in you a kind of habitual gravitation from within that is constantly calling you to your depths.”

I’m thankful for my teenage awareness of my monkey mind and my attraction to meditation that led me eventually to Centering Prayer. Back then, I sat in a small room with a TM trainer who gave me my mantra, a two syllable Sanskrit word that has no meaning to me. He told me never to speak the word out loud. When I learned Centering Prayer, I decided to keep that as my sacred word. I have never spoken that word. That my sacred word only dwells in silence and has no concrete meaning symbolizes that what happens in my inner room belongs to the Divine Mystery and can never be sufficiently expressed. The silence and stillness is my refuge to simply remember God. 🕉

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## BLESSINGS TO OUR OFFICE MANAGERS

After 23 years of serving in the office manager role at The Church of Conscious Harmony, Lisa Genung has retired. Her calm and caring voice and presence were a gift to all! Before retiring in February, many community members were able to send prayers and blessings for Lisa’s extraordinary time of service. If this is news to you and you would like to send a blessing or message to Lisa, please contact our church office at [officemgr@consciousharmony.org](mailto:officemgr@consciousharmony.org).

Our new office manager is a long-time CCH community member and we are so blessed to have her join our staff! Tracy Greiner was trained by Lisa and is ready to assist. Your prayers and blessings for Tracy’s wonderful times ahead are welcome.

All glory to God! 🕉

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## REMAINING 2023 CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS – WHICH WILL YOU CHOOSE?

Centering Prayer is fundamental to our way of transformation. Inviting God’s presence and action within as you sit in silence and stillness is daily nourishment. The Church of Conscious Harmony is offering over 20 retreats and two more Introduction to Centering Prayer classes between April-December! To say “Yes” to the transforming power of being in silence alongside community members with a shared contemplative intention is a gift worth giving yourself.

We invite you to review the list of Centering Prayer retreats and see how many days will fit into your schedule before December. Unique themes include art, songs, sacred embodiment, and the Welcoming Prayer. Lengths vary from half-day to seven-days. Costs vary – many are no charge or by donation, and scholarships are typically available. Registration opens about 6 weeks prior to the retreat.

A complete list and more details are at [consciousharmony.org/calendar/retreats](https://consciousharmony.org/calendar/retreats). Please contact the office with questions. 🕉



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## COMMUNITY PRACTICE MARCH-APRIL

WRITE A SUMMARY  
OF YOUR LIFE STORY

This month, we are invited to continue the practice of remembering by entering into our time body, and using memory to remember and write a part of your life story. Perhaps you wish to focus on a particular time or experience, or several. Perhaps these life memories are a source of joy, or perhaps a source of pain. ☸

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## SERMON SERIES REMEMBER THYSELF

April 16

Self and Consciousness

April 23

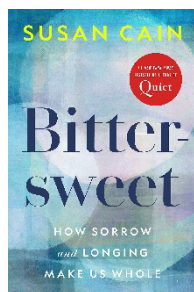
Self and Conscience

April 30

Self and Remembering  
&

11:30am Annual Meeting  
of the Congregation  
(in Sanctuary and livestreamed)

## COMMUNITY READING JANUARY-APRIL

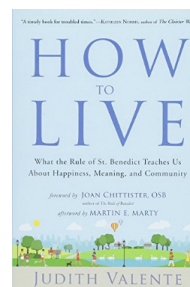
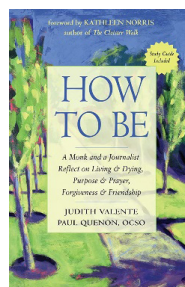


Since January, we have been focused on the first of three community readings for 2023 with Susan Cain's masterful book, *Bittersweet*. You may be familiar with Cain's first book *Quiet*, which celebrated the gift of contemplative life, and the importance of silence and stillness, especially for the creative arts and culture.

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 places can become fruitful wounds. 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. Let's enjoy these final weeks on this community reading. ☸

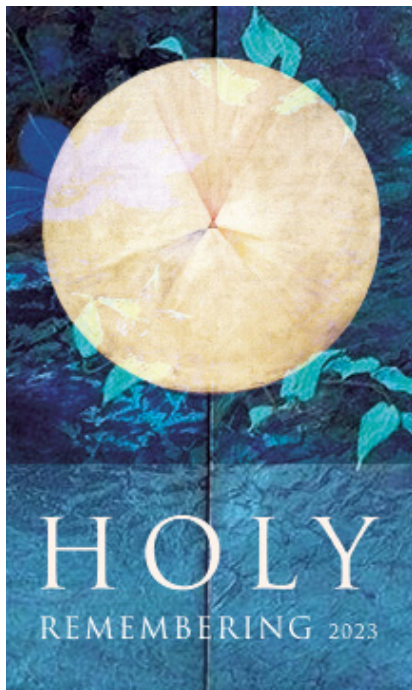
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## BOOK LOOK



Sara Maitland's, *A Book of Silence* is a gorgeous hymn to the gift of silence, and even more helpful when paired with solitude. It is part autobiography, and part spiritual guide to the vast experience of entering more deeply into the silence.

Similarly, Judith Valente's monastic series *How to Be* and *How to Live* will be compelling reading for our community, as we endeavor and aim to be a monastery without walls. Valente is writing for lay folks all around the world who find themselves drawn to the monastic principles and practices, especially silence and solitude. ☸




## AN INVITATION TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING

APRIL 30  
11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Please join us for our State of the Church report and the annual ratification of the Board of Directors by community members.

If you are in the Austin area, you are invited to join us in the Sanctuary following the 10am worship service to interface with the CCH Directors.

If you are unable to be with us in person, the meeting will be livestreamed. 

## HOLY WEEK OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOLY REMEMBERING

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US FOR THESE SACRED EVENTS

Palm Sunday, April 2	Remembering When Feeling Overwhelmed†
Monday, April 3	7pm Lux Divina in Sanctuary❖
Tuesday, April 4	7pm Gurdjieff Music and Readings in Sanctuary†
Wednesday, April 5	7pm Lux Divina in Sanctuary❖
Maundy Thursday, April 6	7pm Taizé service with stations of devotion in Sanctuary†
Good Friday, April 7	Noon Contemplative worship in Sanctuary† (office closed after service)
Friday, April 7 - Sunday April 9	1pm Easter Centering Prayer Vigil Begins in Theosis Chapel and Zoom◇† (Sign up for 30-minute prayer windows between Fri 1pm-Sun 7:30am)
Holy Saturday, April 8	9am-noon Centering Prayer Retreat◇† (Preregister online)
Easter Sunday, April 9	8am Lectio Divina in Sanctuary† 9am Fellowship Brunch❖ 10am Worship Service in Sanctuary† 10am Youth Program❖

†In person and online ❖In person only at CCH ◇Preregister online

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# APRIL CALENDAR

For more details, visit [consciousharmony.com](http://consciousharmony.com) or call 512-347-9673

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Holy Week

April 2-9

See sacred offerings on page 10

Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat (in person and online)

Holy Saturday Easter Vigil led by Mary Anne Best

April 8 9am-noon Register online

Annual Meeting

Board of Directors and Community

April 30 11:30am-12:30pm

## MONTHLY

Caritas Donations

1st Sundays

Bring non-perishables to CCH or donate to [caritasofaustin.org](http://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



THE CHURCH of  
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Peter Haas

Mary Lea McAnally

Lisa Morgan

Tracey Stephens

Stephen Utts

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\*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



**THE CHURCH of  
CONSCIOUS HARMONY**

A Contemplative Christian Community

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Sacred Heart, Odilon Redon

## THE GRACE OF THE RESURRECTION

The two great gifts of Jesus to His disciples on the day of His resurrection, the first day of the New Creation, were the forgiveness of sin and the restoration of divine union. But a still greater gift is implied: He gave them the Holy Spirit, the Source of the forgiveness of sin and of divine union. ... The Resurrection of Jesus is not only an historical event. The words of Jesus to Thomas suggest something more. They might be paraphrased as follows: 'You based your faith on seeing me, Thomas, but there is greater happiness – to believe in my Resurrection because you experience its effects with yourself.' This, of course, is an important message for us. It tells us that it is far better to relate to the risen Christ on the basis of pure faith that rests not on appearances, feelings, external evidence, or what other people say, but on our personal experience of the Christ-life rising up and manifesting its fruits within us. This is the living faith that empowers us to act under the influence of the Spirit – the same Spirit that Jesus breathed upon the apostles on the evening of His Resurrection.

THOMAS KEATING, *THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST*

*Jesus said to him, 'Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those that have not seen and have believed.'*

John 20:29

