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The Mark

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



OUR JOURNEY



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

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY REMEMBERING

THROUGH THE DECADES OF LIFE BY PETER HAAS

Whatever we like to
think we're up to ...
in terms of cosmic exchange,
we are *transformers*,
of molecules and of meaning
in equal measure.

It is the cosmic function
apportioned to us ...

If we do it a certain way,
something happens to us
and to the planet;
if we do it another way,
something else happens.

Cynthia Bourgeault, *Eye of The Heart*

Love is a real force or energy. It
can be transmitted;
it is cumulative.

Because we are composed
of perfect love,
we can harness its energies
to motivate action and change.
We should always remember
that its source
is already present within us.

Beverly Lanzetta, *The Monk Within*

*All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed into the same image
from glory to glory, as from the Lord
who is the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:18

Our year of Holy Remembering invites us to engage a god-like quality: the gift of memory. The capacity to intentionally place our consciousness in a specific place or time, whether the past, the present or even the future is extraordinary. Remembering is one of the most fundamental and transformative capacities human beings can cultivate.

When I reflect on my life, I tend to think about it in terms of decades – what I was doing in my twenties, the 1990s, or referencing back to major milestones like turning forty,

and so on.

I also think about others and remember them by way of decades. For example, when my grandfather was in his fifties, he began building model boats. I usually don't feel the need to be specific about the exact year, so I say something like, in my thirties, I started yoga. At the most, I might add a closer timeframe, such as, in my mid-thirties.

Remembering our life in terms of the decades has precedence. The Bible frequently speaks about generalities of life: *the very years of our life are threescore and ten, or*

for some if they are strong fourscore (Psalm 90:10). Modern psychology proposes many phases or stages of life. Freud proposed five stages of psycho-sexual development prior to adulthood. Erik Erickson developed a full life-cycle model of eight phases, from childhood to late adulthood.

Long before these modern psychological models, William Shakespeare memorably captured the decades of life this way in his play *As You Like It*:

“All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women
merely players; They have
their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time
plays many parts, His acts
being seven ages.”

This month, we are Holy Remembering our thirties and forties in our Sunday sermon series. These are very consequential decades, and as many of us have experienced, by the time we reach our fifties, there feels like less wiggle room to make changes or try new things. There is less energy. There are often fixed commitments and responsibilities.

So major life changes during the thirties and forties are normal, inevitable, and frequent. Jobs,

careers, interests, and relationships begun in one’s twenties are often changed or evolved by one’s forties. Combined, this twenty-year period covers major life structure formation and adjustments.

By fifty, many will have reached their goals set in their twenties (or not). Many will be re-awakening spiritually. Many will be entering new territory – with kids moving out of the house and some beginning to eye early retirement or major career advancement or changes.

The thirties and forties of one’s lifetime are by far years of either intimacy or isolation, and generativity or stagnation. At fifty, one can look back and measure the fruit of the past twenty years, spanning the decades of one’s thirties and forties. One can see the trail of either intimacy of friendships and family or the sorrow of isolation and disrupted relationships. One can see the trail of generativity and fruitfulness, whether in a career or artform, or increasing stagnation and devolution, such as staying in the unworkable, uninspiring ruts of the past.

This twenty-year span sets up the challenges and opportunities of the subsequent decades, the possibilities of powerfully productive work and mentoring, and deeply peaceful

years of the fifties and sixties, as one begins to relax into being oneself and enjoy the fruits of a lifetime becoming oneself. In contrast, others disintegrate – turning more and more to addictions or meaningless pursuits, and some to deep despair.

The aim of all this remembering is to do so in service to others. Our Church Bylaws state that “we provide the focus, the teaching and the community support required for individuals to grow in self-awareness from the illusion of separate and separative existence to the fully enlightened experience of conscious union with the living God.” It is a long journey, and we are on this spiritual path as individuals and together as a community.

May we be encouraged to look at our lifetime, gain wisdom and perspective, and take courage to share with others what we have learned from our journey. It will be meaningful for the 30- and 40-year-olds in our Church community to hear from us who have gone before them – to offer insight and wisdom on our journey, and lessons learned, to help lessen their suffering and be equipped with as much guidance as possible as they endeavor to become the person God is calling them to be. ☺

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

REMEMBERING LOVE BY RODNEY EDMONSON

At 13 years old, I fell in love, the kind of love that is first discovered in adolescence. It was like a drug. In fact, it was biochemical. During that time Joanie Mitchell's song, "Both Sides Now" was in daily rotation and its melancholic melody reinforced my feelings, though the words perplexed me: "I've looked at Love from both sides now, from here and there and still somehow it's Love's illusions I recall, I really don't know Love at all." Though I felt like I knew Love, I really had no understanding.

In my early days at The Church of Conscious Harmony, it was common to hear this statement: Love is not an emotion; it is a choice. I had come to understand through years of marriage that making good choices in regard to your beloved indeed was necessary to maintain a good relationship. However, I wondered if God is Love, and God is in us and around us, then how does Love manifest in our bodies?

The Work of Inner Christianity

says that we have predominantly self-love, which in Dr Maurice Nicoll's words, "self-love loves nothing higher than itself." As we are a multiplicity, each I has its own agenda and its own love. I have found that its goal is to keep me in prison, not knowing I am incarcerated. The love that pervades the whole universe is blocked by our false personality, which steals this energy called love for its own purposes.

In the *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky* on page 1636, Dr. Nicoll has been discussing the idea of loving your neighbor as yourself when he says,

"Suppose we substitute consciousness for love. It would then read: 'Thou shalt be conscious of thy neighbor as thyself.' This would mean 'Thou shalt be conscious of thy neighbor as thou art conscious of thyself.' To me, at least, this rendering would be considerably more

understandable in the light of what the Work teaches about the need for increasing our consciousness. We are not nearly conscious of ourselves. We behold the mote in another's eye, but do not see the beam in our own eye. We do not put ourselves consciously in the position of another person. We do not do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Owing to a general lack of consciousness, human relations in the world are what they are. As you become more and more conscious of what you are really like, you become less and less critical of what the other person is like. Arrogance, superiority, and intolerance fade because they are seen by you as ridiculous. The object of this Work is to increase consciousness in every direction. Observing,

in quiet, the same fault in yourself as you have heatedly or bitterly pointed out in another seems to me to be practical love. For by the Work method of finding the same thing in yourself, you eventually see your neighbor as yourself, and yourself as your neighbor. But you must know yourself to begin with. You must begin to be conscious of yourself. This is the most necessary part of Conscious Love, which is not blind.”

Mr. Gurdjieff expresses the idea that Jesus brought the idea of loving your neighbor to this planet, but that the world was not ready for this message. Gurdjieff explains that in order to truly love, we must first expand our consciousness, which will inevitably lead to love. This is the overall practicality of the Work.

Is Love just a choice and not an emotion? Could this statement be converted to a ‘yes and ...’ statement; and therefore, be both a choice and an emotion?

Increased consciousness means increased choice, and the more consciousness I put into my choices, the more I increase love. To love my neighbor, I need to choose another direction than the direction my false personality wants to take.

This principle has resonated in

me since being introduced to the Work and I came to understand that in order to fully love, my Emotional Center required purification. I saw that negative emotions were blocking the penetration of God’s love. The realization came that I have a choice, and I can go in a different direction than where my false personality dictated. As an emotionally centered type, I let my emotional center rule my being. My moving/instinctual center was my least developed function. I began to pay more attention to this center and in particular to the sensations in my body.

In *The Reality of Being*, Madame de Salzmann states on page 68,

“I need to recognize a higher force, a master and feel its authority. This recognition comes when the ordinary ‘I’, the ego ceases its own movements. Then an energy of a very special quality appears, which is irresistible, all powerful as long as it is recognized and obeyed. It is this energy to which, along with all the traditions, we could give the name ‘love’ if we knew what it meant. Conscious sensation is the first step toward this force ... A conscious sensation for ourselves signifies and is proper to incarnation, in


which the spirit materializes and takes on a different density, becomes flesh.”

Further on page 226 she writes,

“I am a particle of the highest. Through sensation I can know this. We can only know this through sensation. Pure sensation is the name of God – pure burning sensation. The body is the instrument for experiencing this.”

Bernadette Roberts once spoke at CCH. She was asked this question about the No Self state, “So if there is No Self, then who is knowing?” She answered, “The Body knows.” She added, “In this state there is no sorrow ... and there is no joy ... and it’s magnificent!”

It has been my experience that if I can fully constate a strong negative emotion, it will transform into a strong sensation, which produces a state of a much higher quality than my normal consciousness. The Work calls this the Second Conscious Shock, which produces finer energies known in the Work as higher hydrogens. In this state, choices can be clearly made in Love.

Is it possible that this pure sensation has its origin in the Higher Emotional Center? Maybe Love is a choice and an emotion, a higher emotion. Is this manifestation the reality of His blood to our blood? 

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 LECTIO DIVINA BY VALERIE MADDOX

Lectio Divina, a practice of listening to the word of God in scripture, dates back to the time of Saint Benedict in the 6th century. Lectio Divina is Latin for “divine reading.” As we sit in stillness, listening through multiple readings of the same scripture, we are available to receive the knowledge of God that is impregnated with love. We are being invited to enter into a conversation with God and cultivate the gift of contemplation.

On Sunday mornings at The Church of Conscious Harmony, we have a service devoted to Lectio Divina for both in-person and online participants. First, we prepare our spirits, hearts, mind and body by practicing 20 minutes of Centering Prayer. We enter a place of stillness together. Then, we engage in Lectio Divina through four steps that invite us to our secret place, the inner chamber of our heart, to hear the still, quiet voice

of the Spirit that arises and begins to have a conversation with you.

However, I must prepare for the gift of Lectio Divina before the readings begin. Opening myself to what I am and who I am – I belong to God. I’ve been sent to earth from God. I say “Yes,” and internally pray: “Here I am, Lord. I wish to get out of the way and hear from you. I wonder what you will have to say to me, my beloved. I am listening for your voice.” This attitude of heart and intention helps me to hear. Then, I gently breathe, relax, get quiet, wait, and be still inside.

The four ways (or steps) that accompany the readings are:

Listen,
Ponder,
Prayer,
and Be.

On the first reading, we are listening for a word or phrase that speaks to our heart, it is enlivened,

and it catches our attention. We are not listening for information but for transformation as the Holy Spirit awakens our hearts and we hear. Often, for me, I simply take the whole scripture in. I may hear a word, and then as I carefully listen and remain with an open heart and an open mind, that word begins to evolve into something else the Holy Spirit is bringing to me. A treasured, rich gift.

The second reading helps me observe what is evolving as the word or phrase is starting to land and open more deeply within. I ponder it in my heart. The stillness from my inner being assists. I’m aware that it’s quiet inside. So, I wait. I wait for the waters to stir, and in time ... the waters begin moving. Something is occurring, taking form, taking shape, the still small voice is speaking. I’m starting to hear deeper now. I lean in. Here’s the voice of Presence, the voice of

Wisdom, the knowledge of God.
Thank you for speaking, Lord.

On the third reading, many times a prayer arises, from the special quiet of my heart, from what I've heard in my conversation with God. So, I will whisper my prayer within, solely to God.

On the fourth reading, I simply *Be* with all I have received from the sacred blessing of extravagant nourishment from this bounty of indwelling presence, divine wisdom and knowledge of God.

Finally, we are invited to share any gifts we have received. If we feel moved upon by the Spirit, to comfort, encourage, and build up our community, we take turns expressing our gifts or insights aloud with the voice and heart of love.

In my experience, *Lectio Divina* has and does transform my life, little by little, unto the likeness, union, and Theosis of God.

Lectio Divina is purely Holy Remembering. It is Eucharist, communion with God, the Holy of Holies, remembering the Lord our God. A continuous return to a first love relationship through the Yes in my heart that desires to hear from God. In return, God

lovingly speaks with me, where I find myself sitting with and joining indescribable love and entrancing beauty.

As I softly speak the words, “*Lectio Divina, Lectio Divina, Lectio Divina,*” I hear it as a sacred song, like a harp’s voice, bringing forth a deep communion with the living God, and my beloved Jesus the Christ, the lover of my soul. Can you hear the harp playing the song?

This brings forth transformation in surrendering to something greater, a higher power and presence that is growing and changing me into Christ’s likeness and all the fruits of the Spirit.


I am being touched by Spirit, arriving in the state of Self-remembering, the place of union, in stillness of heart and body. I am now invited to explore the beauty of this secret chamber where lavishing love dwells. My sincere intention of devotion, with complete directed attention, has been captured by the flickering flame of love. Having prepared myself to be very present to my beloved, I open the door and enter ... what will I find?

As the voice of my beloved

speaks words of truth to my heart and mind through scripture, I am receiving from higher realms – the guidance, comfort, understanding, insight, intuition, wisdom and knowledge of God.

For myself, it is the mystery of the sacred. The encounters of the presence of the Living God that desires fellowship with me, like a friend to a friend. A very intimate, personal encounter with Divine Love as we become one. At this setting of majesty, we find goodness, kindness, the glad heart of God, and undying perfect love.

I am reminded that Christ’s heart, mind and wisdom is a real force, energy and presence; and that the call of Christ finds us and asks us to know perfect love, to bring change and hope to not only ourselves, but all worlds and everything. Just by our very being. We can simply be! Wherever we find our body, we are a vessel for the Living God, as we are prayer, and we are Eucharist.

May we search out the Lord behind the veil. As it opens for us, may we pass through and be transformed into this breathtaking other than-ness. Conscious Love. 

SCRIPTORIUM

MATURING THROUGH THE DECADES IN CHRIST

BY PETER HAAS

Our focus this month is on the shared spiritual journey. Each of our spiritual journeys is both similar and unique. There are clear and common patterns and thresholds that we all experience on our journey. The decades of life are one way to mark the passage of time on our journey – and also marking clear developmental thresholds. The underlying theme that runs throughout each decade of life and every aspect of the spiritual journey can be summed up using a phrase found in St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 4:13-16:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and


by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

The phrase we wish to focus in on is the notion that we can *become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*. Two words call to our attention: maturity and fullness. What might these words mean and what treasures can they convey to us?

First, the Greek word is *telos* and it is often beautifully translated as mature. Another way of translating *telos* is by the English word complete. The notion of *telos*, from which we get the word telescope, conveys the idea of competition, or reaching the end, or aim for its possibility or purpose. As a telescope only reaches its

full possibilities when it is fully extended and pointed in the right direction to see what wishes to be seen, so too our life is created for a particular end, completion and possibility. What might that be?

Another aspect of the analogy of a telescope is that many telescopes extend one phase or lens chamber at a time. This resonates with the notion of the decades emerging out from each other, the later emanating from the prior, extending out into the full stretch of possible decades, perhaps our 80s and 90s if we are so blessed. Ideally, the farther the decades extend out, the clearer our inner vision becomes.

Seeing or vision expands and takes in more and more as we journey through the decades. We gain wisdom, perspective, insight and understanding. Seeing is related to being – and one way of talking about what it means to be a mature being attaining the full stature or measure of Christ is that we see through eyes of faith and purity of heart, as Jesus taught us, *blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God* (Matthew 5:8). 

THE WORKSHOP

Welcome to the Workshop, where we ponder a question submitted by a participant of The Journey School. Each month, the Workshop aims to answer a question directly related to someone's experience by applying Work ideas to their life in a practical way.

QUESTION: I'm wondering what the Work idea of the Time Body has to say about remembering my prior decades. How do I work on my Time Body, particularly choices I regret that I made in my early 30s?

REPLY: Bravo on making the connection between our exploration of the decades and the Work idea of the Time Body. The aim here is to help make that connection, since we find Time Body work and the remembering of our decades to be very much related.

As for your question regarding the *how* of Time Body work, it is uniquely personal for each of us. However, there are many principles to support our continued exploration and verification of the ideas. Here are just two principles. Try them on and see what you verify for your own inner work and spiritual journey.

The first principle is that time is living and as such we can be in relationship to time, our timeline, from the present to the past, from the past to the present, from the present to future, from the future to the present and from the future to the past. Because time is alive, we can be in relationship to it through the faculties of memory, imagination, and conscious placing of our attention.

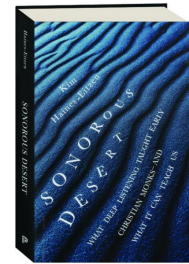
An example of this Time Body work with the past is analogous to rewinding a movie or show you have recorded. As it relates to the future, it is more nuanced, but it is like fast-forwarding the movie. The difference is that the future is not yet created, so you are creating in your Time Body through your imagination. You can also listen to your future self-sending guidance from the future to you now and to your past. If you are speaking back into your past Time Body from the present, it is likely that you are also doing that from the future.

The second principle is that time is a dimension that is intersected by timelessness, or eternity. We can listen now for that higher dimension of eternity and all its transcending qualities here and now. Listening in the silence and stillness of meditation or immediately after a period of meditation, when your faculties are more tuned to subtle energies and institutions, is a lovely practice to explore as it relates to conscious Time Body work. Ⓐ

Submit a question for consideration to the Workshop to: minister@consciousharmony.org.

BOOK LOOK

SILENCE FOR THE JOURNEY



The Sonorous Desert is a lovely late summer read. It is an extraordinary unique book that explores the value of silence, especially as a retreat from the noise and busyness of daily life. Kim Haines-Eitzen draws insights from the hermits and communal monks who fled to the desert in the fourth century to hear and contemplate the word of God. Curiously, rather than finding just the silence, they also found that the desert was alive with its own voices. The truth is silence isn't the absence of noise, rather the underlying ground of all voices, human, animal and the voices of the wind and earth.

Drawing upon her own experiences of field recordings in the deserts of North America and Israel, the reader will discover with Kim how mountains, canyons, caves, escarpments and lush oases are deeply resonant places of inspiration for our own journey into and with the silence of meditative prayer. Ⓐ

COMMUNITY READING

JEANNE DE SALZMANN,
REALITY OF BEING

Our community reading grounds us in the wisdom of Mr. Gurdjieff's leading student and friend, Jeanne de Salzmänn. This is a profound book and invites the reader into self-discovery. This is not a book to read for knowledge alone. It is a book that aids the encounter with the Real in each of us. If you have never read this book before, you may consider reading it in small sections. Consider having a notebook nearby for recording insights, questions, and ponderings that arise in your reading and through the book's wisdom reading you. ☺

SAVE THE DATE SEP 22-23, 2023

We are very blessed and excited to announce that Douglas E. Christie, world renowned contemplative author and professor of spirituality, will lead an enrichment weekend for the Church community September 22-23, in person and online. The retreat theme is: Spiritual Wisdom from the Desert. Professor Christie is the author of *The Insurmountable Darkness of Love* and deeply grounded in the contemplative and monastic traditions and practices. Attendees will be enriched by Douglas' knowledge and infused by his Being. Online registration begins in August. ☺

THE MOUNTAIN OF LOVE BY DON HALE

Twenty-five pilgrims from CCH traveled to The Lama Foundation in New Mexico in July to experience the beauty and mystery of being in community on the sacred mountain. Here is a poem of gratitude for this decades-long tradition.

The Mountain of Love is full of Beans –
 Beings that care and nurture the peace property.
The Mountain of Love silently beckons pilgrims
 from noisy homes below the mystic clouds.
The Mountain of Love changes the direction,
 seeker's seeds grow in Spiritual ground.
The Mountain of Love pours out living water,
 springing from its precious Mother's heart.
The Mountain of Love can create difficult returns
 to a life off of its Mystery-filled campus.
The Mountain of Love exacts pure intention,
 expecting nothing less than now.
The Mountain of Love instructs its dry, fragrant air
 to open and purify all closed love portals.
The Mountain of Love is impossible to ignore
 thousands of prayer miles away.
The Mountain of Love is a labyrinth play
 that never starts its beginning or stops its finale.
The Mountain of Love carries a grave
 of transformed pilgrims in its scrub oak womb.
The Mountain of Love is within reach
 of open hearts and minds, empty and ageless.
The Mountain of Love waits within
 while I run outside to other mountains of love. ☺

AUGUST SERMON SERIES WISDOM FOR THE DECADES OF LIFE

August 6	Remember the 30s
August 13	Remember the 40s
August 20	Remember the 40s
August 27	Remember the 40s

COMMUNITY PRACTICE

JULY-AUGUST
EAT NEW FOODS

Our community practice of eating new foods continues. Perhaps you know that food is a key concept in the teaching of the Work as well as in the sacred scriptures of the world's religions. We are to be mindful of what types and qualities of impressions we are ingesting – images, media, music, conversations, ideas, relationships, and so on. All this is a kind of inner food. So too, food for the stomach can contribute to our health and wellbeing.

This month, continue making being-duty effort to eat something you have never eaten before. Or to cease eating something that you normally eat – for the good of your health or other species. Notice the mechanical ways we eat food. Notice feelings of fear or discomfort as you contemplate eating a new food. Notice attraction and aversion. Study yourself through the practice of eating new things or not eating familiar things. ☯

AUGUST CALENDAR

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

MONTHLY

1st Sundays Caritas Donations

Bring non-perishables to CCH or donate to caritasofaustin.org

WEEKLY

Saturdays

Online Centering Prayer Support Group 7:35am

Sundays

†Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am

❖Intercessory Prayer in Room 211 9:15-9:30am

†Worship Service 10-11:30am

❖Youth Program (preK-12) 10-11:30am

Thursdays

* The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

DAILY

†Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

* Centering Prayer 6-6:20pm



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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



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A Contemplative Christian Community

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*All of us,
gazing
with unveiled face
on the glory
of the Lord,
are becoming
transformed
into the same image
from glory to glory.*

2 Corinthians 3:18



The Transfiguration reveals the basic pattern of the Christian path
... to awaken us to his divine Presence within.
The Eternal Word of God has always been speaking to us interiorly,
but we have not been able to hear.
When we are adequately prepared, the interior Word begins to be heard.
The external word of Scripture and the interior Word
arising from the depths of our being become one.
Our inner experience is confirmed by what we hear in the liturgy and read in Scripture ...
Awakening to the divine Presence emerges from what Meister Eckhardt called
'the ground of being' – that level of being which in Christ is divine by nature
and which in us is divine by participation.

Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*