

March 2024
Volume 36
Number 3



The Mark

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



LETTING GO



... then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY UNKNOWING

LETTING GO BY KAREN RAGLAND

If there can be a separation
from my imagination,
then the possibility exists of
attaining this state of detachment.
It is from this state that I can
begin work at another level.
John Fuchs, *Forty Years After Gurdjieff: A
Guide to Practical Work*

Let the same mind be in you
that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was
in the form of God,
did not regard
equality with God
as something to be grasped;
rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself and became
obedient to the point of death –
even death on a cross.
Philippians 2:5-8

Letting go is like the sudden cessation
of an inner pressure or the dropping of a weight.
It is accompanied by a sudden feeling
of relief and lightness,
with an increased happiness and freedom. ...
Think how great it would be if you could do that
all the time, in any place, and with any event.
David Hawkins, *Letting Go: The Pathway to Surrender*

I came to The Church of
Conscious Harmony after nine
years at a Unity church. When
our minister decided to move on
after serving one year, I knew
we were facing another long
round of minister searching.
So, I decided to explore other
churches, including other Unity
churches, during this transition
time. First on my list was CCH.
I never made it to any of the

others. I found out later that the
Unity I attended was the one
where Tim and Barbara Cook
had ministered before establishing
CCH. It seems I was on some sort
of trajectory. Thankfully, I was
open to exploring the possibilities.
I let go of my former church and
community and joined CCH.

I have experienced three
primary forms of letting go.

1. When life events are thrust

upon me, there is no choice but to let go.

2. When coming to a decision of letting go.

3. When my actions result in feelings of guilt or shame that must be let go.

Recently, I was laid off from my job. Life events like this call for me to reciprocate and let go from my side. An internal letting go (emptying myself) of that job association must be done, in the form of forgiveness and acceptance, to make space for something new and healthy to come in. For me, this looks like acknowledging my part and finding the blessing in this whole event. I also know the gift will reveal itself, it always does. I am required to apply and interview for jobs to receive unemployment benefits, and as of today I am in the middle of interview rounds with a company that moves very slowly. Many days go by between communications so the opportunity for letting go is ongoing. When I observe my mind ruminating over all the points/ answers from the last interview, wondering if I'm going to hear

back, or checking email for the nth time today, I shift the focus into the body and move out into nature. I also use the Welcoming Prayer to help my emotional center remember that everything that comes to me today is for my healing – which could include an email indicating the company has gone with another candidate. I pray, “I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself.” It seems letting go is inextricably connected to embracing the unknown. Letting go and welcoming are active, not passive. Also, at this point, I already have a hint of where I am headed, and it does not include a new job. I may be letting go of the job and the entire profession of 20+ years.

In another case, I have always had an image of myself as a responsible pet owner who did not purchase special bred dogs and would never rehome a dog I adopted, because I would figure out how to make it work. That is one side of the buffer. However, on the other side, I decided to purchase a corgi puppy. And, after a series of harmful events and corrective efforts, the buffer came

down – no more imagination around my superior pet ownership. I came to the tough decision that this precious puppy had to go and made proper arrangements. As I was handing her off, I observed that intellectually this was the best decision, physically I was comforting her, and emotionally I was stunted with pain. The pain of no longer having something I had grown in a very short time to love deeply. The pain of the buffer coming down, which is a good pain that we Work very hard for (by practicing the Work of Inner Christianity). Teary-eyed, I watched as they drove away. While intellectual and moving centers had let go, emotional center was not having it. Grief is pure and needs to be felt, anything else like the harsh condemnation of what I had done was useless suffering. I used non-critical self-observation to fully see this event. Now that the buffer came down and imagination no longer keeps me asleep, I can externally consider all those folks selling and buying puppies or rehoming their pets.

Then, there's useless suffering in the form of guilt or shame. I

have several past experiences that my personality uses to remind me I am bad at my core. They all have a face, and the face is what enters my memory to start the punishment. A simple example is once when I was at a class reunion with my daughter, there was a dance in the evening and a bunch of us got up to do the group dances “Put Your Little Foot” and “Cotton Eyed Joe.” We made it around one loop and as we were coming around for the second, my six-year-old daughter ran up to join me. I was on one of the ends and pushed her back to her seat so I could keep going. Her hurt face is excruciating to me to this day. Fr. Thomas Keating assures us of our basic core of goodness. How does one reconcile this? This useless suffering must be transformed (let go), but how? Do my Work! Many Work ideas help support non-identification and Self-remembering. Letting go needs to be three-centered or it is not really letting go and will result in prolonged useless suffering. My intellectual center

understands this and knows I am a multiplicity. I was asleep. My moving center breathes and sometimes still gets teary eyed. I pray: “God, grant me the serenity to accept all the things I cannot change.” Guilt is a relentless ugly mean beast – self-observe (non-critically) this harsh judge, non-identify, Self-remember – again and again.

Sometimes, prayer is the best salve for my emotional center. My two Letting Go prayers are the Welcoming Prayer and the Serenity Prayer, which appear at the end of this article. It is important to remember though, the relief is not ours to forcibly acquire by Working hard enough or praying long enough. It is given. Yes, I need to show up with my willing effort, and do my Work to empty myself, consent, accept, pray, forgive, detach, surrender, non-identify, welcome.... Then a moment of letting go *Grace* will come quiet the personality and provide the precious lightness of freedom – not because I earned it, but because I am ready

for it in some essential way. Sometimes, this happens to me more organically. I can see, feel and experience something outside of myself, but am quiet inside watching, participating externally as called, and surprisingly not attached to an outcome. It is as if there is a great letting go *current* of some sort that I have tapped into and am gently, quietly swept up and carried along in its flow. The experience of letting go of my sister while she was dying was one of these currents. Lanell was kind to us. She gave us more than a month to abide by and in her leaving. She let me spend a great deal of time by her side while she let go of her human body. It is such a gift and honor when a beloved shares their letting go with me.

Finally, a prayer for all of us facing the uncertainty of layoffs, loss of work or income, diminishment, or the potential loss of a loved one this year. May we let go into the Holy Unknowing and sense deeply the peace and love of God in our experience. ☺

PRAYERS FOR LETTING GO

The shortened Serenity Prayer is the one we all know and love, but there is additional depth in its long form. The new Welcoming Prayer Method is beautifully based in all three centers, while the original is glorious in its thoroughness.

The Serenity Prayer

by Reinhold Niebuhr

(adapted by Alcoholics Anonymous)

God, grant me the serenity to
accept the things
I cannot change,
courage to change the things
I can,
and the wisdom
to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardship
as a pathway to peace.
Taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it.
Trusting that You will make
all things right
if I surrender to Your will.
That I may be reasonably happy
in this life and supremely happy
with You forever in the next.
Amen.

The Welcoming Prayer

by Mary Mrozowski

Welcome, welcome, welcome.
I welcome everything
that comes to me today,
because I know
it's for my healing.
I welcome all thoughts, feelings,
emotions, persons, situations,
and conditions.
I let go of my desire
for power and control.
I let go of my desire
for affection, esteem,
approval, and pleasure.
I let go of my desire
for survival and security.
I let go of my desire
to change any situation,
condition, person or myself.
I open to the love
and presence of God
and God's action within.
Amen.

The Welcoming Prayer Method

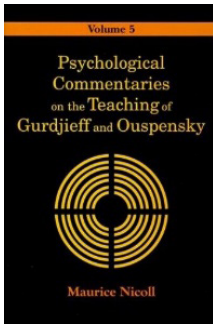
There are three movements
of the prayer:

1. Feel and sink into what you are experiencing this moment in your body.
2. "Welcome" what you are experiencing this moment in your body as an opportunity to consent to the Divine Indwelling.
3. Let go by saying "I let go of my desire for security, affection, control and embrace this moment as it is."

Source: Contemplative Outreach

LET GO
AND
LET GOD





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

THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

NON-IDENTIFYING

BY JO FUENTECILLA

Imagine carrying an object around for an extended amount of time. Unaware of its weight. Then, one day you wake up and choose to observe the object, inside and out. We have all heard the saying, “I feel as if the weight of the world is on my shoulders.” Sometimes, the weight appears to be real, but in truth the weight is necessary and required to transform. In Maurice Nicoll’s *Psychological Commentaries*, he writes about non-identification. He reminds us that when we are identified, there is no light. Rather, there is darkness; we are asleep. The invitation is to self-observe and non-identify the weight that we carry, for example, negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This allows for inner separation, which leads to an entirely different state in man; a new idea of oneself. As you read the snippets from Nicoll below, observe within yourself, then ask, “What have I been holding onto or what is holding onto me? Is it dead weight? Is it food for transformation?” Pondering with and consenting to Holy Unknowing may be a path that leads to letting go of the mechanical patterns of former times.

“When the work says an ordinary person is asleep it means that such a person takes himself not only as a

conscious person, as a person who behaves consciously and knows what he is saying or doing, but also takes himself as *one* – that is, as a full-grown person, a solid ‘I.’ He uses ‘I’ in all he says or does as if *he* were doing it. In other words, he ascribes everything to himself. He ascribes his feelings, moods, thoughts, sensations, and his speech, behaviours and actions to himself, and even his digestion. ... Now this ascribing of everything to oneself, which is identification in its deepest form, leads a person to the idea that everything is due to him or her.”

“One has to be able to say: This is not ‘I.’ Take thoughts. A thought comes to you. You say ‘I’ to it. So you enter it, and it has power over you. But you need not do so. When Christ said that what enters man does not defile him, this was meant. For example, negative thoughts enter us continually. If you have no enclosure, nothing sealed off in yourself, they simply invade you and you are helpless in their power and so you will act from them and express them in gesture, behaviour, speech, or action ... You are asleep in life and asleep in yourself.”


“What do you see in yourselves by self-observation that is weak, lazy, self-pitiful, mean, narrow,

prejudiced, ignorant, stupid, foolish, insincere, negative, jealous, revengeful, hurtful, suspicious, crooked, deceitful, inadequate, and a hundred and one other similar things that belong to lower levels of Being?”

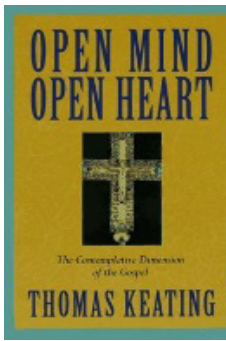
“Try to formulate what it is that makes you negative towards a person ... and try to see what you find so difficult to bear in the other person. ... Realizing that you are just as difficult in yourself as the person you criticize, instantly stops the leak.”

“Now if you have cleared a portico, a hall, a space in yourself by self-observation so that you can see a negative impression coming in and are able not to let it enter freely, not to identify with it, not to let it go where it wishes, not say ‘I’ to it, then you keep clear of the mechanical result of that impression. This is magic. This place is what all must make in their inner world.”

“Remember that acknowledgement gives inner peace.”

Non-identifying teaches us to let go, fear less, and love more – a path to liberation. 

For more experience with these Work teachings, please join the Thursday evening online classes hosted by The Journey School.



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

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

THE PRINCIPAL DISCIPLINE IS LETTING GO

BY SANDRA ELY

In Fr. Thomas Keating's seminal work *Open Mind, Open Heart*, he writes of numerous ways of uniting yourself with God. He reminds us that the purpose of Centering Prayer is not to experience peace, but rather to embrace and evacuate the unconscious obstacles, which leads to the permanent abiding state of union with God – as everything has its foundation in God.

While easier said than done, one of the best ways of letting go of an emotion is simply to *feel* it. Fr. Keating recommends sitting through distressing emotions, even some physical pains or sensations, tears, laughter, fits, moods, jumble thoughts, intense feelings, and other de-stressing experiences. He emphasizes the practice of waiting out the distressing emotional experience; do not try to push it away! “By allowing your attention to move gently toward the emotion and by sinking into it, as though you were getting into a nice jacuzzi, you are embracing God in the feeling. Don't think; just feel the emotion.” Over time, as you and I practice dismantling the false self that interprets these emotions

as disagreeable or distressing, emotional swings gradually dissolve with complete acceptance of what is. We are free from the inner turmoil.

What would it feel like if my inner state were unaffected by the environment I find myself in?

First, notice and identify the emotion. Know that every feeling can help inform us. “Letting go is not a simple term; it is quite subtle and has important nuances—depending on what you are intending to let go of. When a thought is not disturbing, letting go means paying no attention to it. When a thought is disturbing, it won't go away so easily, so you have to let it go in some other way. One way you can let it go is to sink into it and identify with it, out of love for God. This may not be possible at first, but try it and see what happens. The principal discipline of contemplative prayer is letting go.”

Three additional ways to practice are:


Consciously dismantle the emotional programs. “Observe the emotions that most upset you and the events that set them off, but

without analyzing, rationalizing, or justifying your reactions. Name the chief emotion you are feeling and the particular event that triggered it and release the energy that is building up by a strong act of the will such as, ‘I give up my desire for (security, esteem, control)!’ ... The reason that Centering Prayer is not as effective as it could be is that when you emerge from it into the ordinary routines of daily life, your emotional programs start going off again. ... If you work at dismantling the energy centers that cause the upsetting emotions, your efforts will extend the good effects of centering into every aspect of daily life.”

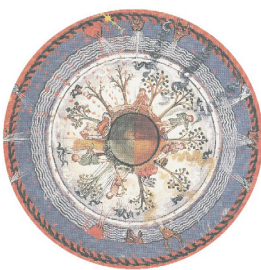
Practice guard of the heart. “This is the practice of releasing upsetting emotions into the present moment. This can be done in one of three ways: doing what you are actually doing, turning your attention to some other occupation, or giving the feeling to Christ. The guard of the heart requires the prompt letting go of personal likes or dislikes. When something arises independently of our plans, we spontaneously try to modify it. Our first reaction, however,

should be openness to what is actually happening so that if our plans are upset, we are not upset. The fruit of guard of the heart is the habitual willingness to change our plans at a moment's notice. It disposes us to accept painful situations as they arise. Then we can decide what to do with them, modifying, correcting or improving them. ... The ordinary events of daily life become our practice. I can't emphasize that too much. A monastic structure is not the path to holiness for lay folks. The routine of daily life is. Contemplative prayer is aimed at transforming daily life with its never-ending round of ordinary activities."

Dismantle excessive group identification. "This is the practice of letting go of our cultural conditioning, preconceived ideas, and overidentification with the values of our particular group. It also means openness to change in ourselves, openness to spiritual development beyond group loyalties, openness to whatever the future holds."

Last, may we always remember, "The experience of being loved by God enables us to accept our false self as it is, and then to let go of it and journey to our true Self. The inward journey to our true Self is the way to Divine love." 

For more information and events involving Centering Prayer, please check our website. The offerings are plentiful, including daily services and monthly retreats.



PRAXIS
FAITH INTENTION PRACTICE
IN COMMUNITY
ever deeper together

FOUNDATIONS

MOVING EVER DEEPER TOGETHER

BY MARY ANNE BEST

Welcome to the monthly *Foundations* column, which sheds light on the foundational principles, aims and intentions of The Church of Conscious Harmony that ground its teachings, offerings and operations. This space is for sharing a selection from previously published materials or an historical perspective that highlights something significant from our foundation.

After launching CCH's first annual aim in 2003 with successful results, the Church's second annual aim invited all to move "Ever Deeper Together" while continuing the intention and practices of Praxis in Community.

Together, we manifested the Praxis Center and moved through the 12 practices of Christian living together: Tithing, Self-Observation, Forgiveness, Lectio Divina, Welcoming, Yes & No, Sabbath, Study, Centering Prayer, Stewardship, Gratitude, and Joy. Many of us, perhaps all of us, experienced profound gifts – unforeseen, wondrous and grace-filled. Individually and collectively, we prayed and practiced, were grown and stretched, wondered and maybe even questioned how and

why. The Lord provides.

From the original 2004 invitation written by co-ministers Tim and Barbara Cook, we revisit:

"We've just completed our first year of Praxis in Community. Our intention as we began this offering a year ago was to develop a consciousness in the entire congregation of some of the basic practices that support the Christian Spiritual Journey. As each month's practice was introduced, we were moved deeper into common understanding of how the practices work to open us to God. We also learned to value spiritual practices and the value of a daily life lived around a core of spiritual practice or praxis.

"This growth in understanding and participation was the fruit of


the original aims that were the basis of the founding of the Church of Conscious Harmony. Having served several churches where daily practice was not stressed, it became absolutely clear to us that transformation required more than just attending church on Sunday. We hungered to meet and share the spiritual journey with others, like ourselves, who wanted to grow deeper in the body of Christ together. Now, 15 years after the birth of our church community, we find ourselves surrounded by the people we longed to meet. Presently, a great many of us have learned the value of praxis and have joined wholeheartedly in making the experience of God's presence the axis and focus of our daily lives.

"This New Year occasion provides us with a symbolic doorway to enter the future with a renewed intention to live together at the deepest possible level of Christian community. Our aim for this year is to review the basic core of practices we studied together last year and to understand and experience more and more how they open us to Grace and serve our personal transformation into Christ.

"I pray that you will choose to make this the year you experience the wondrous mystery of going ever-deeper together. Recognizing and serving the Risen and Living Christ in each of us is our hope of Glory and true hope for our families and our weary world. The door into a new life is wide-open. Will you enter?"

. . .

Such was the invitation in 2004. Such is the invitation in 2024.

The inner Work goes on within each of us. The fire burns. Together we're manifesting the body of the church as St. Paul envisioned. We've been given much. Look around us – the teaching, the teachers, the programs, the facilities, one another – by the laws of the world, such a small community shouldn't have so much. Very few have ever been given what we have. This is no accident; we've been given much and much will be expected. We've been called to transformation, for ourselves and for the world. What this will ultimately look like, we don't know. But one thing is certain; there is nothing more important or more necessary than to have humanity endowed with just such committed lives. 



THE CHURCH *of* CONSCIOUS HARMONY

7406 Newhall Lane
Austin, Texas 78746
512-347-9673
512-347-9675 fax
www.consciousharmony.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mary Anne Best
Ken Ely
Martin Field
Donald Genung
Mary Lea McAnally
Tracey Stephens
Stephen Utts

MINISTRY TEAM COORDINATOR

Mary Anne Best
minister@consciousharmony.org

EMERITUS MINISTERS

Tim Cook (deceased) & Barbara Cook

MUSIC

Billie Woods, Director
musicdir@consciousharmony.org
Sue Young

THE JOURNEY SCHOOL

Mary Anne Best, Abbess
tjs@consciousharmony.org

YOUTH EDUCATION SERVICES

Deborah Hale, Children's Director
childmin@consciousharmony.org
Jacque Botto, Asst to Children's Director
Don Hale, Youth Director
youthdir@consciousharmony.org
David Jenkins, Asst to Youth Director

OFFICE

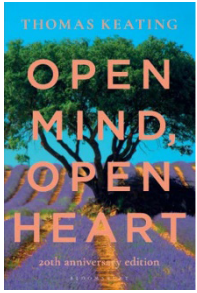
Mon-Fri 10am-2pm
Donald Genung, Business Manager
bizmgr@consciousharmony.org
Tracy Greiner, Office Manager
officemgr@consciousharmony.org
Jill Frank, Program Director
programdir@consciousharmony.org
Mark Caddell, Media Producer
mediapro@consciousharmony.org

NEWSLETTER

Sandra Ely, Editor
garzaely@swbell.net
Carol Hagar, Design
carol.hagar@austintennisacademy.com

CCH CORE BOOKS

The Church of Conscious Harmony, recommends 23 books as essential reading for growth and transformation on the spiritual journey. Copies are on display in the Praxis Center. One core foundational book will appear in these pages each month.



Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel
by Fr. Thomas Keating

Written by one of our beloved spiritual teachers and designed to initiate the reader into a deep, living relationship with God, this foundational resource on Centering Prayer moves beyond meditation and particular acts to the intuitive level of contemplation, a contemplative state. Fr. Keating gives an overview of the history of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition and step-by-step guidance in the method of Centering Prayer. Special attention is paid to the role of Christian growth, transformation, and active prayer. The book ends with an explicit treatment of the contemplative dimension of the gospel. *Open Mind, Open Heart* takes readers into a world where God can do anything, into a realm of the greatest adventure, “Where one is open to the Infinite and hence to infinite possibilities.” ☸

COMMUNITY READING

JANUARY-MARCH

An Unknown World: Notes on the Meaning of the Earth
by Jacob Needleman

The future of the Earth is up to humanity, but first we must become conscious humans. Grounded in the eternal, we embark on a process of inner evolution of our capacities for conscious attention, freedom and creativity to receive the unknown, objective conscience, real will and impartial love. This small book is both mind and heart opening, reminding us to serve our highest purpose. ☸

COMMUNITY PRACTICE

JANUARY-MARCH

PRACTICING HOPE

How are you practicing hope today? A question to ask yourself each day and await a response. The response may be small, practical, ordinary, or even extraordinary. This practice is planting a daily seed that may lead to an abundant harvest. ☸

SUNDAY MESSAGE THEMES

THE PATH
OF THE BEATITUDES:
A LENTEN JOURNEY

As we embrace Lent
and prepare for Easter,
we continue our journey
through the Beatitudes
in the Sunday talks.

Please join us
in the sanctuary
at 10:00 a.m.
on Sundays
to participate and
grow in community. ☸

HOLY WEEK OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOLY UNKNOWING

You are invited to join us for these sacred events.

Palm Sunday, March 24

8am Lectio Divina, 10am Worship Services†
10am Youth Program❖
6pm Gurdjieff Music and Readings†

Wednesday, March 27

6pm Contemplative Eucharistic Service†

Maundy Thursday, March 28

7pm Taizé service†

Good Friday, March 29

Noon Contemplative worship†
(office closed after service)

Good Friday-Easter Sunday

1pm Centering Prayer Vigil runs through Easter morning
in Theosis Chapel and Zoom◇†

(Sign up for a 30-minute prayer times between Fri 1pm-Sun 7:30am)

Saturday, March 30

9am-noon Holy Saturday Centering Prayer Retreat◇†
(Preregister online)

Easter Sunday, March 31

8am Lectio Divina†
9am Fellowship Brunch❖
10am Worship Service†
10am Youth Program❖

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

MARCH CALENDAR

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

†Contemplative Lenten Services
Wednesdays Mar 6-27 6pm

8-Day Lenten Centering Prayer Retreat
Mar 8-15 in Belton TX Waitlist only.

United in Prayer Day Global Online Retreat
hosted by Contemplative Outreach
Mar 8-9 8pm-8pm (CT)

❖Community Workday
Mar 9 9am-noon

❖4-Day Lenten Centering Prayer Commuter Retreat
Mar 20-23 at CCH Register online

Holy Week
See sacred offerings on page 11

†Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Holy Saturday Easter Vigil
Mar 30 9am-noon Register online

MONTHLY

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

WEEKLY

Wednesdays

❖Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm

Thursdays

*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

Fridays

❖Communion Service in Sacristy 7:40am

Saturdays

*Centering Prayer Support Group 7:35am

Sundays

†Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am
❖Intercessory Prayer 9-9:20am Room 211
†Worship Service 10-11:30am
❖Youth Program (preK-12) 10-11:30am

DAILY

†Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am
*Centering Prayer 6-6:20pm

*Please join 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

7406 Newhall Lane Austin TX 78746

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTIN TX
PERMIT # 3386



*"Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes
in the name of the Lord!"* Mark 11:9

PASSION SUNDAY

Christ on the donkey,
waving aside the cheers of the crowd,
is riding to His death.

This is His way of revealing
the heart of God once and for all
in such a way

that no one can ever doubt
God's infinite mercy.

The celebrant says over the bread and wine,
'This is my Body.'

The power of those words extends
to each of us

as Christ awakens and celebrates
His great sacrifice in our own hearts saying,
'You are my body. You are my blood.'

You, with all of humanity,
are manifestations in the flesh
of the new creation.

of Thomas Keating, Awakenings

