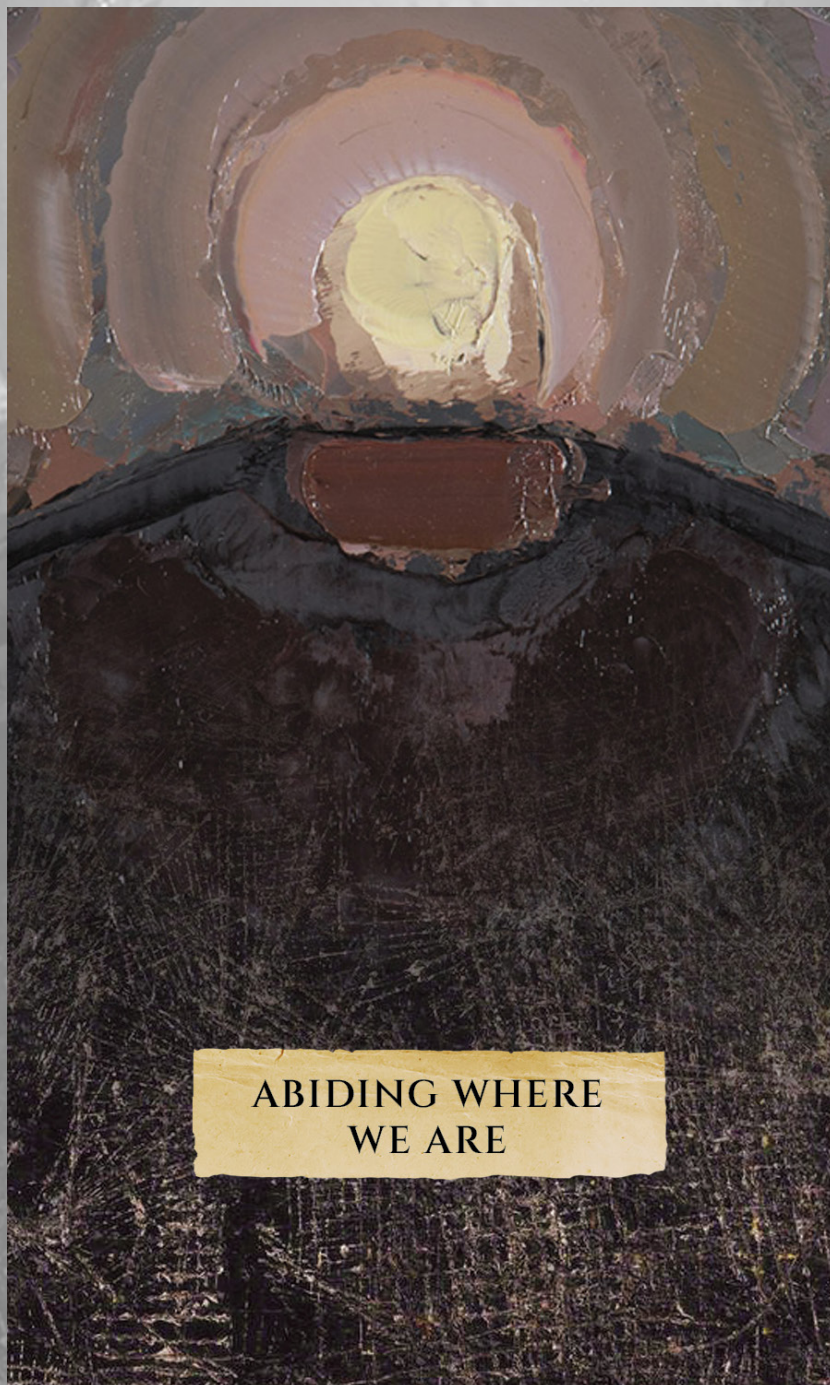


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The Mark

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



ABIDING WHERE
WE ARE



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

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY UNKNOWING

ABIDING WHERE WE ARE BY HOWARD BOGGS

To stay in front of the unknown,
my mind must be
profoundly silent.

This is a silence that is not
obtained by suppressing
or by sacrifice. ...

All this thinking of the known
prevents me from having
an experience of reality.

Then stillness and silence take a
meaning for me.

There is the possibility
of a quiet mind.

I no longer seek the known.

I no longer seek security
or to become.

I feel myself freer, more open.

The thought becomes free,
moment after moment,
and there is then an
understanding of truth
at each moment.

This is the only way to know.

True thinking has no conclusion.

It always begins anew.

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

*Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.
So he went in to stay with them. Luke 24:29*

There you'll find that light which is ever radiant
Impermanence even if no one – not even you – notices.

Jon M. Sweeney, Mark S. Burrows, *Meister Eckhart's Book of Darkness & Light*

Most of my younger life, I was wayward in my thoughts and actions or lived “under the law of accident” according to Beryl Pogson’s *The Work Life* on page 168. This still exists in me today and has caused a great deal of difficulty and useless suffering. When I was older, it got to a point where I stretched out my hands to the night sky and asked, “Please help me!” That request (or prayer) was answered over a long period of time in a way I would have never imagined.

I had told a friend about what I was experiencing and that I had been going to different churches to

find one that would help find some direction in my life. A few weeks later, that same friend described a church that they attended and really liked. It sounded incredible, so I told them that I would go and visit.

When I arrived at The Church of Conscious Harmony, I could tell it was different than other churches I had visited. The architecture of the sanctuary reminded me of Colorado where I grew up. Just by setting my feet on the grounds, I could sense I was somewhere special. When I sat down, a feeling of calm and peace started to come over me. Then a minister named Tim Cook started

talking. I was somewhat captivated by what he was talking about, not the usual Christian dogma but some real-world relation to life and to something greater.

I returned, again and again, for over 20 years now because I started learning new things and applying them to myself, wondering if it just might make a difference in the waywardness found in the personality or the “false self” that Fr. Thomas Keating speaks of.

After attending CCH for a while, I wanted to do something to help, to give back to the church. Turns out, they needed someone to help run audio for a class on Thursday evenings called the Work of Inner Christianity. I later learned running the sound board, since it was a struggle, was also called “a Work opportunity,” meaning a way to observe and learn things about myself.

I was a little astonished by what was being shared. People were talking about themselves in third person about things that I would not be comfortable telling a room full of people. Things they were really struggling with or had learned about themselves. Things they had not seen before. I was more and more amazed at what I heard and knew this was something I had been looking for, an honest and authentic way to deal with parts of myself that I wasn't happy with

or didn't even know were there. It then seemed I had even more of a reason to keep coming back.

I remember when one of the instructors told the class that the Work was only one leg that the church stands on, the other is Centering Prayer. Well, my initial thought was, “I can't sit still for two minutes let alone twenty.” But I leaned into the unknown silence, becoming more free, more open. Later, while on a 3-day commuter retreat, I went home and spent the whole evening with tears streaming, it's called unloading. Then a few months later, I was on my first 10-day Centering Prayer retreat.

This showed me how much I didn't know and didn't conceive of in my spiritual and psychological life. As our annual aim speaks about, not knowing or unknowing is a big part of the journey. I also learned to abide in things, wait for new things to come, and to observe how I am living in the world.

Through Grace, I am taking life in a different way, trying (when I can remember) to stay ahead of the things that distract and throw me off track. The best way to do this is in the silence. Not by trying to suppress any of the anger or dissatisfaction that comes up, but by being a neutral observer, seeing what is going on in the smallness of my thoughts and actions. This

silent observer can change what is happening in the moment because it sees what is really happening, the reality of the situation.

By abiding where I am and being able to see reality clearly (not from the lower parts of my consciousness with associative and mechanical thinking), this is being freer and more open to life situations, to what else is available to me and others in the moment. Through practice, I understand that being more open and freer in the moment brings Divine assistance for the next moment and the next. This brings a knowing and understanding of truth in each moment.

Maybe I'm not so wayward these days ... all I can do is chuckle about that. I can also feel into what Fr. Keating used to share about how he seemed to keep getting worse instead of better as he got older. The personality keeps struggling against the higher spiritual Self and it is an ongoing battle. If my consciousness can remain in Love, in the Light, there is no contest. Yet that is the hard part, remaining in the Light. Even though it is always there, it is so easy to get caught up in life and forget. The more I can remain or abide in that Love, the more I get to let go of and unknow all I think I know. May it be so. ☺

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

ABIDE IN ME AND I WILL ABIDE IN YOU BY BARBARA COOK

Originally published in *The Mark*, August 2006, this article beautifully aligns with our monthly theme.

Rest is a theological term meaning “to abide,” to live in God, the reality of the indwelling Holy Trinity. Rest, then, is the state of being in which, whether we are sitting or praying or working or sleeping, we know that we are united to the Beloved.

Before Centering Prayer came into my life through Fr. Thomas Keating, I thought that rest meant taking a break from labor or having a vacation with time to “sit a spell” or to sleep. Fr. Keating taught me that to rest, I needed to consent to my relationship with God. I learned how to stop my ordinary, busy self, to simply sit down and intend to open to this Presence and love by silently repeating a pre-selected sacred word as a symbol of my intent. By regularly resting daily in this openness to God, I am becoming more aware of this Love and Presence even in my ordinary life, while doing life’s ordinary activities.

Fr. Thomas used to say that

even if we are taking a vacation, our false self goes with us – so it is not really such a vacation after all. The false self is our imaginary or worldly self that is formed to help get us by in the temporal world, the world that is passing with time. The false self is formed around the perception that our apparent needs weren’t satisfied when we were children. These needs center around issues of security and survival; affection, approval, esteem and pleasure; and power and control. These energy centers tend to be exaggerated and they keep us acting childish. They also addict us to worldly substitutes for true meaning and prevent us from loving service to God’s family and plan for our eternal life – a real adventure of growth and the true destiny of all mankind.

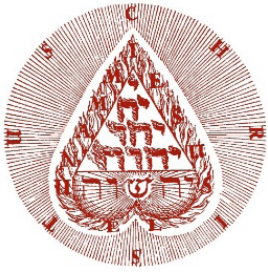
We get tastes of God’s Presence even at the beginning of this great adventure, but as we develop our relationship with God through our practice of twice-daily Centering Prayer, it becomes increasingly obvious and constant. And when we go apart on retreats, we discover that we are always resting in the

Beloved, even when we are not aware of it.

Those of us who have set out on this journey will recognize what I’m talking about. For those who are just beginning, you will find it if you persist. At times the journey will feel like rest, but sometimes it will feel difficult, like anything but rest. Those are the moments when we are being healed of our old selves. But as the unconscious obstacles to God’s love are healed and released, we find that more and more we actually experience ourselves at rest, abiding in God.

A bit of honest self-observation will reveal that our false self does not provide the security, the power or the pleasure that it promises. All we are seeking is found right where St. Paul said we would find it: “Christ in you, your hope of glory.” We find this liberating Truth for ourselves and in ourselves by taking refuge in God twice a day and learning to abide always in Him. ☸

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



*The Tetragrammaton
in The Human Heart*
Jacob Böhme

FOUNDATIONS

REGENERATION BY MARY ANNE BEST

In the first book of his *Libri Apologetici*, Jacob Böhme describes the meaning of the Tetragrammaton symbol: “For we men have one book in common which points to God. Each has it within himself, which is the priceless Name of God. Its letters are the flames of His love, which He out of His heart in the priceless Name of Jesus has revealed in us. Read these letters in your hearts and spirits and you have books enough. All the writings of the children of God direct you unto that one book, for therein lie all the treasures of wisdom. This book is Christ in you.”

The year was 2005. It was our third annual aim. The call and the invitation were to regeneration of the old man into the New Man – a heart transformed in Christ ... to move deeper into our hearts, into the Source of Love and live faith-filled lives grounded in this Truth. In this, we were reminded that we have help: we have our intention, our study, our practice – and we have one another as well as infinite Grace. A new fundraising campaign was announced that year to build Theosis Chapel, as well as to complete parking and landscaping on the Church campus. New courses were

introduced for becoming a member of The Church of Conscious Harmony and for preparing for the sacrament of Baptism.

We studied the dispositions of Regeneration over twelve months with twelve practices:

Faith, Intention, Listening, Consent, Hope, Metanoia, Forbearance, Surrender, Love, Awareness of Grace, Serving, and Gratitude.

We were prompted by the words of Jacob Böhme:

“Therefore, he who would call himself a true Christian must try himself and find what kind of properties drive and rule him, whether the Spirit of Christ moves him to Truth and Goodness and to the love of his neighbor. ... If he has a real hunger after such virtue, then he will be drawn. And he must practice ... for the drawing of God to Christ consists in the will, but true Life consists in the doing, for the right spirit does what is right.”

And so it was.

The monthly *Foundations* column sheds light on the foundational principles, aims and intentions that ground The Church Conscious Harmony’s 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.



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THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

TOWARD THE UNKNOWN THROUGH SILENCE

“It is the quiet itself that is important, silence as the fact itself, not what one obtains through it. We need to discover the nature of silence, when thought, feeling and body are all silent. What takes place when thought is really quiet, and also feeling? The silence ... does it become awake to itself? In being attentive to the nature of silence, I feel an intelligence awaken. What is important is its appearance, not what it illuminates. This intelligence is sacred and cannot be at the service of my ego, my ambition. The silence that appears when I see myself taken by illusion is revealing, but only if I do not wish for it. I feel the action of reality on me, but I do not give myself up to it. I learn to let my thought flower and thus come to an end. The field is free; I offer no opposition. Thinking becomes a light for itself and no longer seeks experience. It is necessary to pass through the world of the known to enter the unknown, the void, the real.

“I begin to understand that silence does not come because I seek to become silent. It comes when the mind sees the process of thought and its conditioning by the known. For this it must observe as one watches a beloved

child, without comparing or condemning. One observes in order to understand. It is only when I know this conditioning that silence and tranquility are sought not for security but for the freedom to receive the unknown, the truth. Then the mind becomes very quiet. This opens the door to a state that is reality, with immense possibilities. The mind

is no longer an observer of the unknown. It is the unknown itself.

“The wish to be conscious is the wish *to be*. It can only be understood in silence.” ☸

This connection with our monthly aim of “Abiding Where We Are” comes from Jeanne de Salzmans’s *The Reality of Being: The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff*, pages 166-167. For more experience with these Work teachings, you are invited to join the Thursday evening online classes hosted by The Journey School.

COMMUNITY PRACTICE

APRIL-MAY

PRACTICING RESURRECTION

Daily struggles, discernments and the vicissitudes of life amid moments of grace: the rich food provided for the digestion of impressions, the growth of essence and Being, giving rise to new birth. A daily practice of Centering Prayer and embodying self-observation, non-identification and Self-remembering in Christ. To practice resurrection can be a daily aim in the concrete and specific circumstances of our lives. ☸

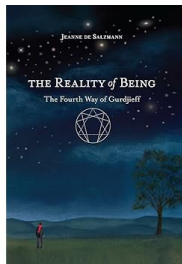
SERMON THEME FOR EASTER-PENTECOST

REDEMPTION AND RESURRECTED LIFE

During the Octave of Easter, we look to what it is to receive a new life – a life richer through the experience of suffering, failings, sorrow, struggle, loss and death, and arising ultimately unto Love. ☸

CORE FOUNDATIONAL 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.



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

Based on notebooks kept by G.I. Gurdjieff's closest follower, this book offers deep insight into his spiritual teachings - a way of gnosis or "knowledge of being" passed on from remote antiquity. It is a complete and uniquely authoritative guide to the great teacher's ideas and to his methods for liberating ourselves from the state of "waking sleep" in which most of us live our lives. (A)

COMMUNITY READING

APRIL–MAY

In the Introduction of *I Am Not I*, Jacob Needleman begins with these opening sentences: "Among the great questions of the human heart, none is more central than the question, 'Who am I?' And among the great answers of the human spirit, none is more central than the experience of 'I Am.' In fact, in the course of an intensely lived human life – a normal human life filled with the search for Truth – this question and this answer eventually run parallel to each other, coming closer and closer together until the question becomes the answer and the answer becomes the question. The present book seeks to unpack these seemingly obscure assertions through a literary form suited to the contemporary psyche, starved as that psyche is for the feeling of Truth."

Needleman chooses the literary form of a dialogue with his younger self to ponder what is missing from our culture. Rendered as a stage play, the conversation between the 80-year-old author and his younger selves unfolds, accompanied along the way by his childhood friend, Elias, whom we were introduced to in our first community reading for the year, Needleman's *An Unknown World: Notes on the Meaning of the Earth*. An ambiguity emerges as to whether this is strictly the author's internal dialogue or whether the younger self may be nurturing a rebirth of the author. This small book both inspires and evokes and would be a worthy companion to the community practice of practicing resurrection by offering a fresh look at humanity's search for Truth in a living universe. (A)

APRIL CALENDAR

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

†Annual Meeting of Members
and the Board of Directors
April 7 11:30am-12:30pm

❖Sacred Sounds Retreat
Apr 13 9am-3pm Register online

†Douglas E. Christie Workshop
May 3-4 Register online

MONTHLY

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

WEEKLY

Wednesdays

❖Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm
†Contemplative Communion Service
6:00-6:45pm

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 9:30am Room 302

†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



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A Contemplative Christian Community

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Rather than feeling unworthy,
we must recognize that God longs for us,
searches for us, joins us,
pulls us forward in the journey.
Our God is a Living God.



RESURRECTION

The resurrection opens for us a totally new life.
It is the decisive and determining moment in human history.
As a result, divine union as an abiding state of consciousness
is now accessible to every human being.

As Christ passes into His glorification,
He incorporates us into His own glorified body
And shares with us His divine happiness ...

'Christ is risen!' is not merely the cry
of a few historical witnesses.

It is the cry of all people throughout the centuries
who have realized Christ rising in them,
not in the form of a passing enthusiasm,
but in the form of an unshakable conviction.

The light of Christ radiating from the Paschal Candle
reveals in a ritual manner our abiding union with Him
and its power to transform every aspect of our lives.

Thomas Keating, *Manifesting God*