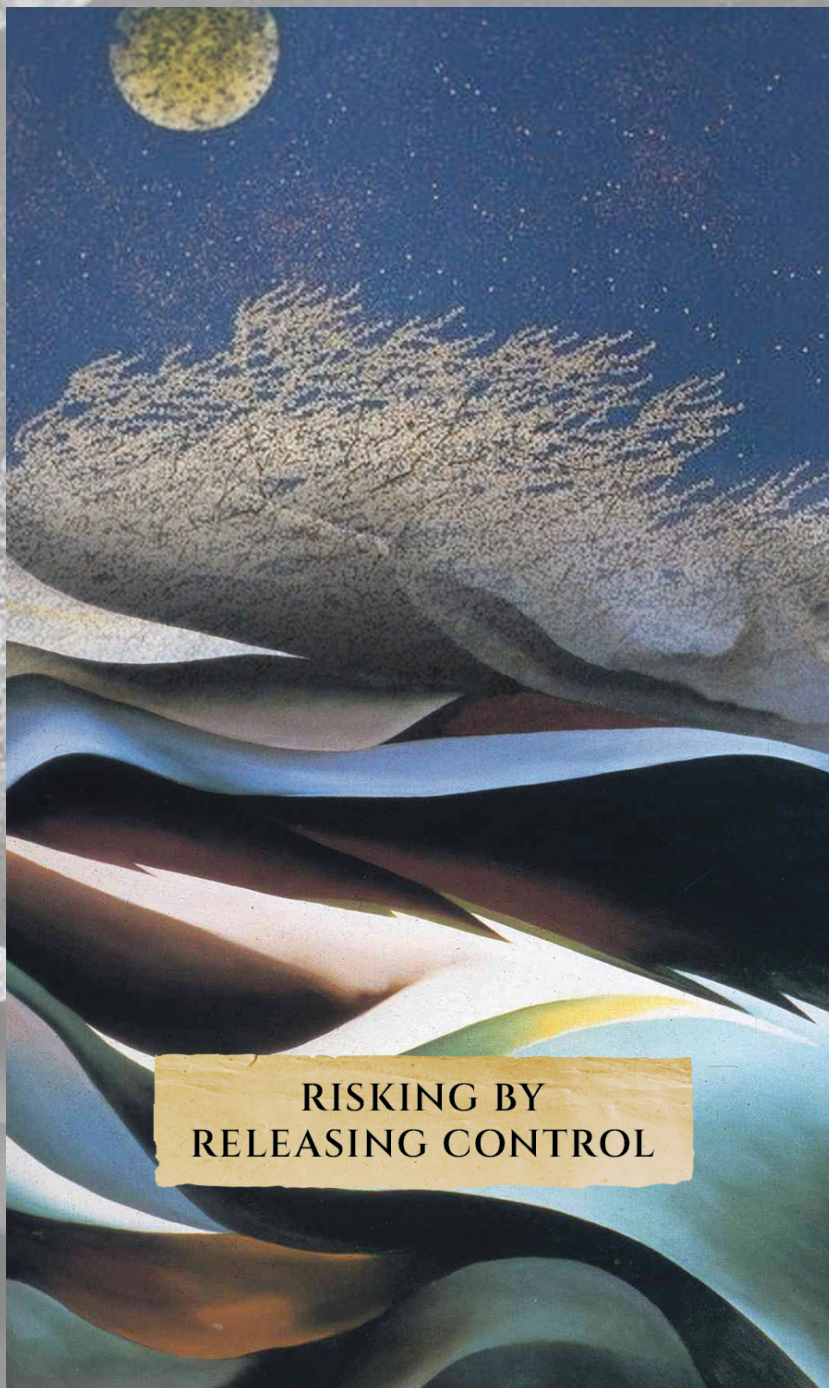


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The Mark

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RISKING BY
RELEASING CONTROL



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

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY UNKNOWING

CONSENTING INTO THE UNKNOWN: RISKING BY RELEASING CONTROL

BY GINGER BARNETT

What is clear is that there is no possessive attitude in Divine Love; that it gives itself completely. And, in the Trinity, this is delightful. This is what beatitude is because it is a love beyond any love that we can imagine. It is a love that is totally, and actually and really being given all the time, so that it is like an enormous river of Divine Love that is flowing among the members of the Trinity forever.

Thomas Keating, *The Gift of Life:
Death & Dying, Life & Living*

We must learn how to be still and
let Spirit, the I AM,
work in us,
that we may indeed be made
“a new creation” ...
that we may have
the mind of Christ in all things.

Emilie Cady, *Lessons in Truth*

*It is not what you and I do – submit ... reject ... It is what God
is doing, and God is creating something totally new, a new creation.*

Galatians 6:15

I sit down to work on a group project I have agreed to take part in. I feel unqualified and way outside my comfort zone. I catch a glimpse of an internal part of me (an ‘I’) that believes it will not succeed in producing anything worthy. This is called “second force” in the Work of Inner Christianity. Another inner ‘I’ enters to muffle the original “Yes” that was my response to the invitation to take this on. I feel stuck in all manner of identification. My false-self system is taking a stand.

Practicing Consent Deeply

I follow my thoughts and emotions to their locations in my body. Feeling a tight grip in my gut (fear), I continue to focus and sink in. Welcome....

I open to God’s presence in the sensation; in stillness, resisting

the impulse to let go too quickly. Welcome....

An ‘I’ is surprised at the tenaciousness of the grip. There is a temptation to move away but I remain still and stay with the sensation, sinking in again. Welcome....

Aware of God’s presence, grateful for this divine accompaniment, I sink in more deeply, daring to trust the process. “I let go of my desire for security, affection, control and open to this moment as it is.”

The Welcoming Practice, like Centering Prayer, is a prayer of consent, but it calls for more active attention and engagement than Centering Prayer’s “alert receptivity.” It is a powerful tool for confronting and dismantling the false self system and purifying the emotional center.

It means death to the false self – a substantial risk because it is the only self we know.

Recurring Programs for Happiness

One morning, the phone rang at 6 o'clock. It was my dad. There was an urgency in his voice, "Ginger, I've had a long talk with your mother this morning," (Mother had died five years prior to this), "and we know you're in trouble. We want to help you. How much money do you need to pay off your credit card debt?"

I had been acting out with compulsive shopping and overspending for years, driven to acquire everything I thought was required to look like a successful grownup in the world. It was a program for happiness that could not possibly work. The addiction was a deep, dark secret, now exposed. No more hiding behind the illusion I had built in a futile attempt to control my presentation to others to win their approval. I was terrified. It was a nightmare in which I believed the consequence of my actions would mean losing my father's love. It felt like my very survival was at stake.

This relationship with my father was a major element in the construction of my false-self system. His love for me was tender, but also conditional. I was the apple of his eye, yet I felt I could never live up to his expectations. I had naively placed him high on a pedestal, idealizing him, and at the same

time feared his stern and impatient manner, cowering beneath his quick judgments. I would learn to feel frightened, small and unworthy.

Considering this story in the context of Fr. Thomas Keating's emotional programs for happiness, I observe the energy centers at play. It is easy to identify the primary energy center in the 'I's that are desperate for approval, esteem, and love. These passive 'I's are experts in finding ways to avoid being seen and are particularly unwilling to face confrontation and criticism. They reside in the inner states of "Ginger asleep" and make up the operating system that was firmly in place when I became a Work student in 2005.

Over time, I have observed pendulum swings between these passive 'I's to a set of 'I's that take control when things get too intense. Fueled by anger, Righteous Indignation and The Bull Dog power through to get the job done – no matter what. These bully 'I's reinforce the passive 'I's, keeping them feeling justified in hiding for comfort and safety. It is a vicious recurrence.

Choosing a New Creation


Between the extremes of the pendulum swings is a still point, a place in my being that is quiet and trusting. With persistence in Centering Prayer, the Welcoming Prayer, and with sincere efforts in the Work of Inner Christianity, I find that I'm living more and more from

this still place. Here, the presence of divine love continues healing the deep wounds from early childhood.

On that morning of my dad's phone call, almost two decades ago, I received a shock. Instead of lashing out in condemnation, my father proceeded to make arrangements to send the funds that would wipe my financial slate clean. It was a true act of mercy, and a moment that opened the way for me to gradually accept the love and forgiveness he was offering. Through time-body work, he and I have both been healed by that love. All the tarnished slates that had held us in bondage were wiped clean – for both of us.

I realize that each of life's moments presents a choice.

What will I identify with? Will I shrink in the face of fear, believing that I am unworthy? Will I justify this anger? Or will I trust God enough to fully surrender and release the negative emotions that continue to hold me back?

"Bondage or liberty, which?" as Emilie Cady boldly begins in *Lessons in Truth*. Am I willing to let go more fully, risking the death of the false self and opening the way to something new? Risking by releasing control. ... I wonder: What might be waiting for me in the unknowing of a new creation? I choose to persevere and accept what happens! As Fr. Thomas says, "When you actually consent, you're giving away any control whatsoever over the results of what you're doing." 

THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

SOMETHING QUITE DEFINITE BY ANNE LOFTIN BALL

Seems I have always been a skimmer – floating on the surface like a water bug, not having the courage, discipline, or motivation to go deeper. Self-observation revealed this. Then, Maurice Nicoll offers a tool for Working with such a condition, “Now since so many do not comprehend what is meant by working on oneself, let it be repeated that there is no such thing. This has been said many times before. I mean, that to tell me that you are working on yourself means nothing to me. But if you tell me you are working on *something quite definite that you have observed in yourself*, then I will be glad to hear it.” (*Commentaries*, pp. 1536-1538)

I have been using a scatter-shot approach to the core practice of self-observation, non-identification and Self-remembering. The cycle typically starts with observing something, drifts into criticizing it, then fizzles out on Self-remembering. Then onto the next incomplete observation. Nicoll offers a tool: “There is a great density of special meaning concealed in


each Work-word. It is because of this density that, as one grows in understanding, their meaning grows and accompanies you. ... But here is what you have got to realize and realize again and again—namely, that the meaning of Work-words can never begin to be understood unless you start to work on something definite in yourself.”

He lists some Work-words: “identifying, internal considering, Self-remembering, negative emotions, self-observation, sleep, wrong feeling of ‘I’, waking, death, re-birth, Real I, mechanicalness, chief feature, false personality, being, multiplicity, levels, octaves, scale” and many others. What if each of these dense and sacred Work-words is a lens through which something quite definite can be viewed? What if the meaning of the Work-word grows as we release control, and something higher reflects back?

Nicoll cautions that it is not necessary to tell anyone what the quite definite thing you have observed is, but to keep it in

“stillness, in silence.” So, how might you share your Work around the one specific thing you have observed in yourself and are working on, say, in your Spiritual Journey Group? Perhaps, tell it without story? To feel and sink into the quite definite thing by welcoming the feeling of it, non-identify with it, and Self-remember by letting go?

The Welcoming Prayer: Consent on the Go praxis booklet offers: “Letting go means passing through the energy and not around it, not running away or pushing it back into the unconscious through denial or distraction. One does not identify with it or act it out, but allows it to be transformed by the simple act of sticking with it and experiencing it.”

Grace reminds me that these gifts and tools are not to be used as a self-improvement project or for fun analytical pursuits. I walk the razor’s edge of non-duality: I am not the fixer. I do not need to hope for fixing. I ask for the humility to consent to the presence and action of God in my life. Amen. 



FOUNDATIONS

FORGIVENESS BY MARY ANNE BEST

Early in 2009, Tim Cook noted in a letter to the community, “Poised and ready to move into the greatest and undoubtedly most challenging, yet potentially rewarding, annual aim that we have shared to date, we’ve prepared ourselves with ever-deepening community consciousness to come face to face with the heart of Christianity itself – that is, issues of forgiveness, both personal and corporate.” And indeed we did. Month by month we exploded first our own need for God’s forgiveness, then the wish to feel forgiveness for parents, for family, for friends, for lovers and spouses, for abusers and criminals, for corporations and employers, for governments, for educational institutions, for races and cultures, for religion and churches, for God. Our aims for the year were to:

1. Unburden our hearts
2. To raise \$60,000 in funds
... to furnish the sacred space of our sanctuary platform with specially created furniture of intention and beauty
... to develop a land use plan for our grounds
... to create contemplative trails
3. To connect our common intentionality through personal icons which are replicas of those in Theosis Chapel

Each person who participated in the annual aim was given a replica of the icons in Theosis Chapel for their

own altar.

Our “sounding *Do*” was inspired by this writing by Maurice Nicoll:

“Now how, when you begin to see your own mechanicalness in your behavior, can you blame others who were equally so? Were not those who you think caused your suffering mechanical people? Remember that in such a case you can only *forgive*, which in the Gospels means, *dazzlingly*, ‘cancel’ the debt. Yes, but this is possible according to your level of being. A low level of being forgives no one. It only sees its own merit. That surely is a key to how to reach a higher level of being. When, through self-observation and work on yourself, you see more and more clearly that you are as bad as anyone else, then you ascend the Ladder of Being which ends in Divine Being – which forgives all.” (*Commentaries*, p. 1240)

Tim concluded his invitational letter by saying, “This year, moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit, we will experience the empowerment of our shared intention and the support of Christian community, the true Body of Christ, as we participate in the regeneration of ourselves and God’s world, I invite you to join us in forgiven life.”

Now over halfway into 2024, we can self-observe, non-identify and Self-remember once again into forgiven life and awaken in Advent and Christmas as the New Man. May it be so.



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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

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS WITHIN

BY BARBARA COOK

As we have acquired the human condition in our journey through life, we try (with no possibility of success) to fulfill our basic needs for security, control and affection from the world that we experience through our senses. Yet the happiness we are looking for is right inside, the very ground of our being, and goes unnoticed while we are seeking outside.

If we have been looking in the wrong direction for our happiness, it is time for *metanoia*, to repent, to turn around. We can begin by consenting to God's offer of love right now, just where we are, just as we are.


The best way I know to do that is sitting silently in Centering Prayer for 20-30 minutes, twice a day. Anyone who has practiced this simple prayer of faith can tell you that they can begin to sense the Kingdom of Heaven right here and now. Centering Prayer also helps to develop qualities that can bear divine love, the true satisfaction of all our desires; qualities like patience, stillness, readiness, listening, trust, hope in the Beloved, humor toward one's self, and good will toward others begin to emerge. These qualities feel spacious; they make room for love and for others, who we

begin to realize are also beloved of God.

When we say "yes" to what comes before us, remembering that it is there for our healing and union with God, we are most open and available to *agape*. A powerful tool for being able to say "yes" goes like this: "Welcome, welcome, welcome. Today I welcome everything that happens to me as part of my healing and union with God. I welcome every emotion, every sensation, every thought, every person, every condition, every situation. I let go of my need for power and control. I let go of my need for affection, esteem, approval, and pleasure. I let go of my need for security and survival. I open to the love and Presence of God and his healing restoring power within me."

With that prayer and the desire

everywhere, we help undo our acquired programs for happiness that prevent us from receiving God's always present love. So, by opening to and receiving God's love and presence in the silence, and by welcoming the life events and situations that help us to let go of our acquired self, we begin to receive God's love. As we are able to live more and more in a disposition of love – acceptance, welcoming, waiting, generosity and trust – God takes care of the details of our lives.


May we continue embodying Christ's qualities within and accept God's schedule and perfect timing. 

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

SUNDAY MESSAGE THEMES

THE EXTRAORDINARY PARABLES OF JESUS

We are nearing the end of our exploration of the wise and extraordinary parables of Jesus in the spirit of Holy Unknowing. Jesus shows us a powerful path of compassion, courage, and complete trust in God, inspiring us to open ourselves to Christ's influences and welcome this radical transformation of our being.

May these selected parables challenge and inspire us to risk by releasing control, let go of our ordinary models of reality and welcome the Kingdom of Heaven. 

COMMUNITY READING

The Blue Sapphire of the Mind: Notes for a Contemplative Ecology
by Douglas Christie



This is the last month for this summer community reading of Douglas Christie's contemplative approach towards restoring our sense of the Earth as a sacred place and to live with regard for its well-being.

Drawing on the insights of the early Christian monastics and ecological writings, Christie emphasizes that our attention to the natural world must endure. We must find ways of expressing our deepest moral and spiritual values with greater care and responsibility in a sustainable relationship with one another and other organisms. May this book awaken the heart to all living beings. (A)

COMMUNITY PRACTICE

PRACTICING HOSPITALITY

In the midst of our summer travels and hosting, we are invited to practice hospitality as a contemplative practice, an inner disposition. Contemplative hospitality is mutuality shared in stillness of being-presence. Hospitality is love in action. Anxiety, hurriedness, much doing can block the reciprocal gift that hospitality can bring. Discover its gifts in both giving as a host and receiving as a guest. (A)

FOUNDATIONAL BOOKS

Lessons in Truth by H. Emilie Cady

Lessons in Truth is a clear, concise representation of metaphysical Christianity. These spiritual concepts show us how to increase our personal empowerment and enhance our spiritual growth. Our lives can be transformed by the power of our thoughts, words, and beliefs. (A)

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.

AUGUST CALENDAR

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

❖ 1-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Aug 3 9am-4pm Register online

MONTHLY

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

WEEKLY

Wednesdays

†Contemplative Service 6-7pm

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 6-6:25pm

*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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THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

The Trinity, Christ, Mary, these can never be separated, for without Mary there would have been no revelation of Christ, no man Jesus and no Christianity. She was as necessary for the revelation of Christ as was Almighty God ...

Apart from Mary's "sinless" birth, however, her "Assumption" reveals the true nature of resurrection as the "revelation" of Christ – which was not a soul coming back to a body, such as people think of "resurrection."

That Jesus and Mary Ascended to the same glorious estate God willed for all mankind, illustrates that beyond man's hang-up with gender, in heaven there is only one (genderless) "Christ." ...

Considering Christianity depends on Mary, it is important to understand not merely "who" she was, but "what" she is. ... As the heart of God, Mary is as utterly divine and transcendent as the Trinity Itself. Of all the terms for the extraordinary mystery of Mary, "Theotokos" [God-bearer] best epitomizes the true nature of her eternal (and maternal) transcendence in God.

Bernadette Roberts, *The Real Christ*, "Theotokos"

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters,
by the mercies of God,
to present your bodies as a living sacrifice,
holy and acceptable to God,
which is your spiritual worship.*

Romans 12:1