

September 2024

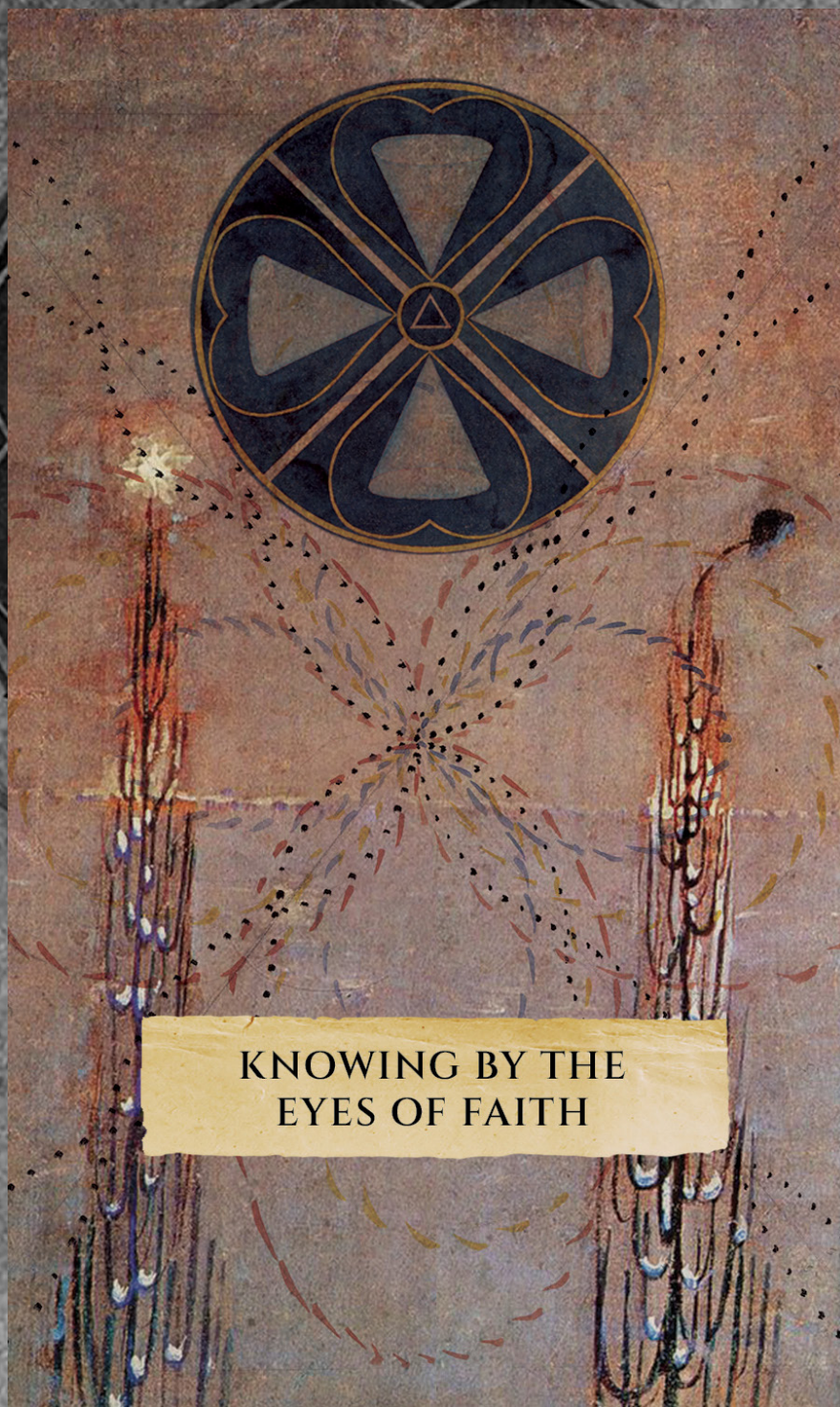
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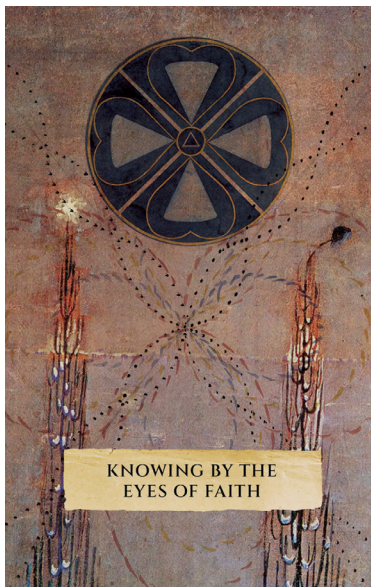


The Mark

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



KNOWING BY THE
EYES OF FAITH



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

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY UNKNOWING

BE STILL AND KNOW BY CAROLYN ASH

The “I” is wrapped up with God,
like the double helix
of a DNA molecule,
in a seamless flow of life ...

Deep within the cave of my heart,
a depth that belongs to me alone,
I recognize a fire that burns
brilliantly and glows with warmth.

... In the search for who I am
I find God, and in finding God
I find my “self” as no separate self
but being itself flowing into
and out of an unquenchable
power of divine love.

The more we enter into the
mystical depth of our personal lives,
the more we realize there is no “I”
apart from a thou ...

God is mystery,
and we too exist in that mystery.

We are caught up in an
“I-Thou” relationship
of the Father and Son in such a
way that, like Jesus, we too are the
“thou” of the Father.

Iliia Delio, *The Hours of the Universe*

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7

“By means of all created things, without exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us and molds us. We imagined it as distant and inaccessible, whereas in fact we live steeped in its burning layers.”

Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*

A few years ago, around the time I arrived on The Church of Conscious Harmony’s digital doorstep, a friend casually said, “I feel like an apprentice to stillness.” The words shimmered within me. What does it mean to be an apprentice to stillness? How still is still? I remembered Elijah, *Can you hear the ‘still small voice of God’ in the midst of earthquake, wind, and fire?* (1 Kings 19:12-13) “I am definitely not that still!” I thought.

Traditionally, an apprentice is someone who learns by observing, doing and studying with a master. I said, “Yes! I wish to be an apprentice to Stillness. I desire to be in Stillness’ daily presence to learn, to practice, to deepen.” I have come to recognize Stillness as the voice of a higher center that is always there to lead and guide me. I am invited to pay attention. Sometimes I do. Often, I forget.

My personality likes to have a plan, to see what lies ahead, to follow a map (preferably one someone else has drawn) and to anticipate the twists, turns and roadblocks on the way to a destination. Currents of fear, anxiety and doubt often bubble up around life’s events and experiences, often resulting

in a spinning mind and a sense of turmoil in my gut. I am apt to take on activities with a great sense of duty and responsibility. It is a pattern for me: set a goal, strive to reach it, nose to the grindstone, do whatever it takes. Then do more! I am learning to observe these traits as I navigate life and apply them to my spiritual growth.

Those characteristics were evident as I began the Work of Inner Christianity. Often, it felt like trying to take a sip from a fire hose. So much information! New emails every week! I felt frustrated as I struggled to achieve, to “get it,” to “do it well.” At the same time, I felt delight, like I was home and warmly invited to commit to the Work.

One night, my mom came to me in a dream and simply said, “Hold the reins lightly.” It was a wise invitation to take things as they come without resistance, objection or striving. My Work experience shifted as I released the desire to succeed and progress toward a presumed goal. I am learning to hold the reins lightly in many other aspects of life too. When I observe the energetic swirl of mechanical responses that come from habit, conditioning and imagination, I pray, “May I hear the still small voice in the midst of the thunder.” Stillness quietly invites me to rest in what T.S. Elliot called the “still point of the turning world.”

While on a retreat last year, I walked the labyrinth and muttered, “I don’t know why I am doing this. I am just walking in circles.” I wanted clarity and fireworks in my spiritual life, which felt bland and ordinary. Stillness counseled, “Just follow the path.” “What does that mean?” I asked. “Of course, I want to know where I am going and how to get there!” Stillness reminded me of how I found CCH. Peter Haas had been invited to lead an Advent retreat for a group here in Southern California in 2020. I didn’t know who he was, so I did what we always do, I Googled his name – a minister at The Church of Conscious Harmony. “What kind of place is that?” I exclaimed. I visited the website: “The Church of Conscious Harmony exists for anyone, anywhere who wants to make God-devotion the center of their life while living in the ordinary world...” I Zoomed in the next Sunday, and I have been here since. I signed up for The Journey School as soon as registration opened and joined a Journey Group. I followed a path I didn’t know was a path.

Later, as I pondered the words of the labyrinth, I heard the song “You don’t have to know the way, the way knows the way.” by Lyndsey Scott. I thought, “Can I, do I, trust that I don’t have to know the way? Can I just follow the path?” Stillness

whispered, “What if the answer isn’t a thought? There is so much more to knowing than what I think in my head. You already know deep within, Knowing without knowing. Hold the reins lightly. Just follow the path. We don’t have to know the way; the Way knows the way. Walk in faith.”

I am learning to take one step and then the next step. When this path feels strewn with the pebbles of fear and the boulders of depleting emotions, I aim to trust my inner knowing, listen to my body, honor my emotions. I cultivate stillness in Centering Prayer, ever-growing periods of silence and solitude, walks in nature, and praying the Welcoming Prayer. Following my heart’s lead, I become aware of the Spirit’s fruits – love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – growing around me. I am nourished for the journey.

Sometimes I can only see the path as I look back, recognizing God’s presence in the events in my life that were full of struggle and pain as well as those that were joy- and wonder-filled. They are waypoints, steps I took unknowing into the unknown. An apprentice to Stillness, I listen for the still small voice of God in the midst of the earthquake, wind, and fire.

“The divine assails us, penetrates us and molds us,” Teilhard reminds me. ☺



MERCY



Go and learn the meaning of the words, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

Matthew 9:13

FOUNDATIONS

BY MARY ANNE BEST

What if you knew you were totally dependent on God's mercy, confident that that mercy is boundless? What if you were convinced that you had the infinite mercy of God always with you? What if you were at the mercy of God rather than life's circumstances? The invitation for the 2010 annual aim of mercy was to know this as living truth.

We initially heard from Tim Cook: "Through the Work practice of self-observation, I have seen how often I am mistaken, how often I judge others and how often I forget to feel gratitude for the abundant graces that God is always pouring into my life. Observing my inner world so clearly makes it difficult for me to hold others to a standard that I have yet to attain or to expect them to behave toward me more lovingly and generously than I am to others. It is humbling and liberating to realize just how much I am like all the others in my life in one way or another. It enables me to let go of the burdensome

and wearying habit of judging and reacting to others. So, the focus of this last year [forgiveness] has been a great blessing to me. I love feeling how much I have been forgiven and I also love feeling how much more forgiving I feel. Our community aims are powerful transformers of consciousness. Our community aim for 2010 explores the idea of mercy. Christ has made it crystal clear that God is always merciful. What do we do with that knowledge? A good start would be to make efforts to extend it. Remember what Jesus said about it: Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7). A year from now, when we look back at this new beginning, I know we'll understand more about the God-given grace of mercy."

Then, we heard from Barbara: "God's nature is always lawful and, of course, there must be laws that govern the universe or there would be no order but simply chaos. ... The Golden Rule also expresses a law: treat others as you would like

to be treated – because we live in a lawful universe, what you put out you get back. That's justice. But God is not just just; God is merciful. The spiritual journey is a long journey in time rather than space. It involves more than simply knowing about God's mercy. It means to live from it as a constant experience. If we consent to it, it enables us to move from being selfish and totally self-centered to being a Christ-centered being, a son of God. In his great mercy, God has totally equipped us to participate in this radical transformation of our being ... if we simply consent. ... Make your commitment to your growth and healing in God and see for yourself what our merciful Father will do in response. Participate more deeply in your faith community and join with your brothers and sister as we deepen in life, love and light. As living cells in the Body of Christ we encourage each other on the path as we share the journey into becoming sons and daughters of the living God. Be counted in God's plan for redemption. It works if you work it, and you are worth it. The practice of Centering Prayer prepares us for the spiritual gift of contemplation, which opens us to the contemplative life where we 'see' God's love, mercy and compassion, as well as his justice and order through the x-ray eyes of faith."

And so it was and is. 2010, a good year. 2024, a good year.

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

COMING ALIVENESS BY PATRICK PITMAN

I offer a poem as a description of the experience as it happened to me during a Sacred Sounds Retreat at The Church of Conscious Harmony. During a break, I wandered downhill to find a spot to sit quietly. As much as the sanctuary and chapel are places that calm me, the woods and water below reveal their own softening, encouraging power.

Not a clear, nor cloudy sky
Sunlight scattered by branches
No hat, nor glass, to shade my eye
In this time of in-betweenness

Shoes off, I cross a stream
Water in no rush to its destination
A chair I've found, a spot to dream
In this time of in-betweenness


Not hot, nor cold, this Spring day
The breeze feels indecisive
I ought to move, but I sit and stay
In this time of in-betweenness

Do I strive, did I fail?
It's all mud, silt and confusion
Alone in the wood, I sound, I wail
In this time of in-betweenness

What to do, where to go?
A lazy limestone stream bed
Must I choose, be it Yes or No,
In this time of in-betweenness?

This weathered chair holds me
Wide armrests and back reclining
I am alone, but I'm not lonely
In this time of in-betweenness

The old bell sounds, a tug of rope
The breeze has changed, it quickens
I feel it now, be it faith or hope
In this time of coming aliveness

A breath, a sigh, I rise
Birdsong beckons encouragement
Brilliantly blue, a dragonfly!
In this time of coming aliveness 



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THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

APPLICATION OF FAITH

BY JO FUENTECILLA

This month we are contemplating “Knowing by the Eyes of Faith.” Maurice Nicoll elucidates the significance and application of faith – challenging us to utilize this concept so that we may undergo our destined transformation.

Nicoll writes in the *Commentaries* that faith is “a different way of thinking” and the “basis for belief in what is not seen.” Further, “If faith causes a man to perceive in his mind that a world, invisible to sense, lies above the seen world and is the cause of it, then he perceives things in scale – that is, in terms of higher levels and lower levels.” (pp. 1623-1624)

To realize scale, means to realize different levels of meaning. The Gospel of Matthew provides an example.


When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.” Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it

you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

The disciples were thinking on a lower level, based on senses. Christ was speaking psychologically referring to the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Nicoll continues, “Christ connects the disciples’ lack of psychological understanding and consequent inability to see what was meant with littleness of faith.” (pp. 1625-1626)

Faith develops by building Work-memory and thinking about and applying the Work. “When you first hear the Work being taught, you receive it on the Formatory Centre ... the *external* division of the Intellectual Centre. Here memory of the Work is formed. It is that part of the mind that you use when you learn anything at school. ... The Work is designed to


penetrate to the interior divisions of centres once it is received, and to grow in them, so that gradually you see more and more meaning even in the simplest formulations contained in its teaching.” (pp. 1716-1717)

When Work-memory passes inwards and reaches the interior divisions of centers, communication with Higher Centers eventually becomes possible. Help is received from within and the meaning of the Work becomes clearer. With faith, I am able to see beyond the senses and grasp the meaning of something higher—allowing me to be open to a world that includes the Conscious Circle of Humanity, and to awaken and get in touch with higher forces that will help me acknowledge, receive, and respond with psychological understanding. 

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

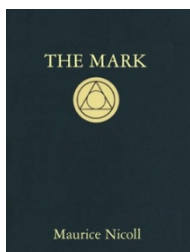
COMMUNITY PRACTICE

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER
PRACTICING SOLIDARITY

In this fall season of anticipated fragmentation and the expression of polarities, we are invited to practice solidarity in the deeply held belief that we are all inextricably connected to each other by something much greater than ourselves. Thus, we can gaze upon the world with eyes wide open, call God into our awareness, and keep watch with Christ who is in all and all is in Christ. No need to push, oppose, express opposition, rather to walk along side in affirmation of the One who is the heart of all creation. 

COMMUNITY READING & CORE FOUNDATIONAL BOOK

SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER
THE MARK BY MAURICE NICOLL



The Mark is essential reading for everyone who is a student of the Fourth Way. It is one of our Church's core foundational books. Thus, a copy is on display in the Praxis Center.

The Mark discusses, in relation to the Gospels, the idea that real religion is about another latent but unborn level in everyone. The end of this transformation, inside oneself, is thought of as *The Mark* – to be aimed at. The origin of the Greek word for *sin* means missing the mark, as in failing to meet the intended target. To miss the mark has come to mean failing in one's purpose, and so erring or wrongdoing.

The book's preface was written by Jane Mounsey, Maurice Nicoll's daughter. She noted: "...When Dr. Nicoll died, he had not yet decided on the order of the contents of this book, and they have therefore been arranged as we think he would have wished. 'The Parable of the Sower and the Seed,' 'Metanoia,' 'Nicodemus' and 'Truth' had already been finished and corrected and were clearly meant for inclusion in this book. He also definitely wished to include the dream, headed 'The New Will,' the incomplete piece on 'War in Heaven,' and the unfinished chapter at the end called 'The Telos.' A few fragments from his notebooks have been added where it is thought they may interest the reader. The rest of the material is taken from papers he wrote at various times, and which he might, or might not, have included. I would only add that here, often in passages of great beauty, is the key for those who long for a greater understanding of the teaching of Christ, and the meaning of our existence on this earth." Ⓜ

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.

SERMON SERIES: ONENESS SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER

During this Fall season of mystery and unknowing, our Sunday messages will explore the many ways we can experience the reality of *Oneness* on our spiritual journey. Ⓜ

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

5-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
at Cedarbrake
Sep 6-10 Wait list only, contact office

Beelzebub's Tales Reading Group,
Online with Robin Bloor
Mondays, Sep 9-Dec 9 7-8:30pm
Register online \$140

❖ Lessons in Truth, led by Donald Genung
Wednesdays, Sep 18-Nov 13 7-8:30pm
In-person class Register online

❖ Introduction to Centering Prayer Class
Sep 28 8:30am-12:30pm +
4 followup Mondays 7-8:15pm online
Preregister by 9/27 \$15

❖ One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Sep 28 9am-3pm Register online

MONTHLY

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

WEEKLY

Wednesdays

❖ Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm
(resumes Sep 11)
† 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

*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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*When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple there
whom He loved, He said to His mother,
“Woman, behold your son.”
Then, He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.”*

John 19:26-27

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Mary’s intimate relationship with Christ, her disposition of self-surrender, her alert receptivity, and her promptness in responding to the wishes of the Spirit are the great contemplative virtues. Mary is the paradigm of those who are manifesting Christ in their individual lives.

Her compassion was rooted in the kind of love that God has for us – a love that is tender, firm and completely self-giving. ...
God is reigning despite all appearances to the contrary.

The risen Christ is ever-present.
This is the faith that Mary had when she looked on what was left of her Son and yet saw Him reigning from the cross – the triumph of God hidden in the greatest suffering. This makes her our companion and support in every conceivable trial.

Thomas Keating, *Awakenings*

