

November 2024

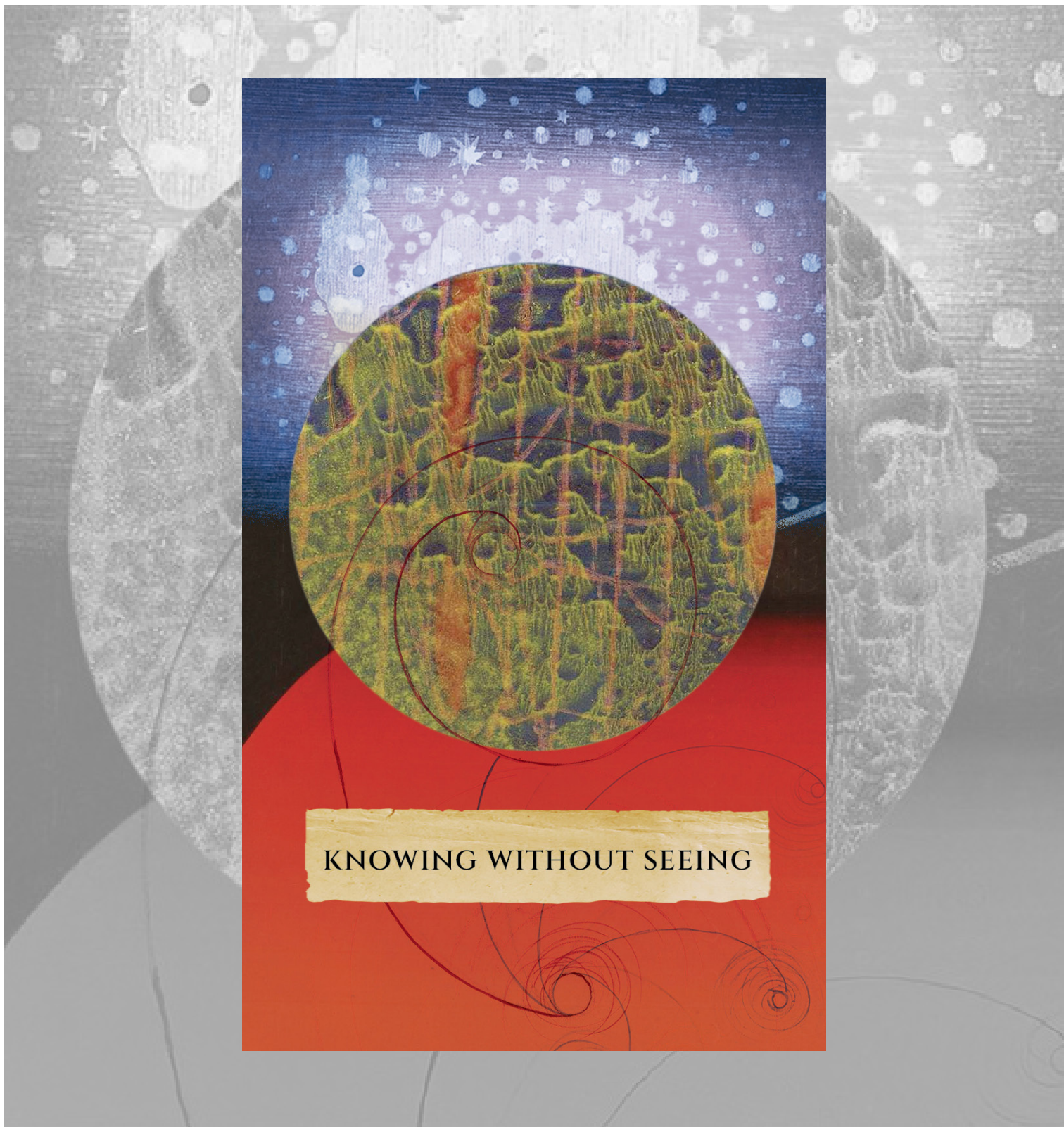
Volume 36

Number 11

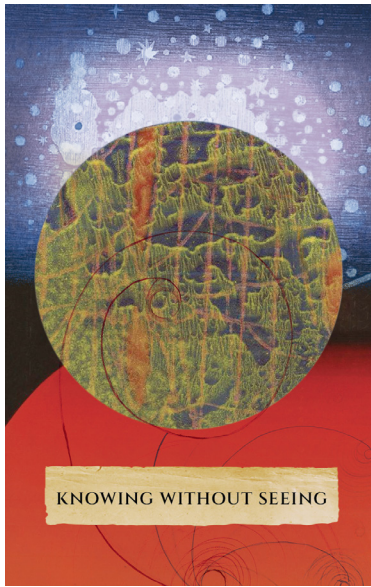


The Mark

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



KNOWING WITHOUT SEEING



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

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY UNKNOWING

TO KNOW WITHOUT SEEING BY MERRITT MYERS

Gratitude therefore
takes nothing for granted,
is never unresponsive,
is constantly awakening
to new wonder and to praise
of the goodness of God.
For the grateful person knows
that God is good,
not by hearsay but by experience.
And that is what makes
all the difference.

Thomas Merton, *Thoughts on Solitude*

*For this slight momentary affliction
is preparing for us an eternal weight
of glory beyond all comparison,
because we look not to
the things that are seen
but to the things which are unseen;
for the things that are seen
are transient,
but the things that are unseen
are eternal.*

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

Faith, in its essential meaning, denotes a conviction, a certainty, that
a higher interpretation of life exists, and as a consequence,
that the transformation of Man is a possibility.

Maurice Nicoll, *The New Man*

Reflecting on this month's
theme of "Knowing Without Seeing"
brings me to appreciate my faith
and the foundational teachings and
practices that I have learned on this
spiritual journey. The Work of Inner
Christianity, Contemplative prayer,
and Scripture help me remember that
every waking moment is a choice.

*This is the time of fulfillment.
The Kingdom of God is at hand.
Repent and believe in the Gospel.*
Mark 1:15

This applies urgency, some
pressure. God's only opportunity to
reach me is right here in this present
moment and only a measure of my
attention is required. Can I maintain
a connection? Not if I fill my time and
attention with noise, creating static to

my connection.

*Then Jesus told [Thomas],
"Because you have seen me, you
have believed; blessed are those
who have not seen, and yet have
believed." John 20:29*

Of course, what we believe or
disbelieve is a choice, and these
beliefs may define our intellectual
character and mold our self-image
and relationships with others. Behind
it all, do I really know that my
true identity is spirit, temporarily
inhabiting a physical form? Do I hear
the still voice of my source? Instead
of trying to fill the mind's desire
to know the unknowable with the
known, can I embrace the mystery
of my own being?

"I confuse the true self with

the body and its functions. But the true self is like space—unattached, pure, infinite.” Jeanne de Salzmann, *Reality of Being*

Our Church Eucharist prayer says, “We know that you always hear and answer when we ask ...” So how do we know? To hear the call to consciously chosen love, I must be alert and awake – stop, breathe, and remember. With the Work and the practice of self-observation, I can see myself, witness my life and others with the eyes of Christ (as I know Christ) and remember that I am connected to an infinite source of unconditional love. But sometimes, I will fail.

Barbara Cook told me that once we are “on the path,” nothing is wasted. God uses everything, even our mechanical moments, asleep at the wheel, for our transformation. For me, this golden nugget opens the door to mercy, to forgive myself for my imperfect Work efforts, and to trust God’s plan for me over my own. And through this faith, I do not have to fear the outcomes. In fact, it is when life has brought me to my knees, and I have no answers that I make the biggest jumps toward unity with God. To know this always and everywhere is a Real aim towards unity with The Absolute, with All: creation and destruction, triumph and failure, even my programs for happiness that stand in the way.

Applying Work ideas and Centering Prayer practices in our

own lives, our unique life experiences draw us to different conclusions and inform diverse perspectives. Every path ebbs and flows forming a unique relationship with God, a unique faith, and strengthens the body of Christ with and for one another in community. Most of us won’t be transformed into Christ overnight by some miraculous revelation, but by a lifelong evolution of seeking closeness to God, daily practices, letting go, and deepening understanding.

I confess that in my high school era ignorance I criticized a friend’s mother for spending time in silence daily, thinking “What a monumental waste of time!” Then, when my kids were younger, I took any available opportunities for silence in small increments, six or ten minutes at a time, craving still, quiet sanctuary when extra time and energy were rarely accessible. Still, even for short periods of silent prayer, I struggle to quiet my mind, which habitually seeks answers and puts form to the invisible to explain the mystery. To abide in the unknown, I must let go, empty, accept what is, and enter a new place of receiving. Lately, I have been so drawn to the silence, giddy for my time of rich communion and intimate connection with God. The One awaits my attention.

Like Jeanne de Salzmann, “I am here to obey, to obey an authority that I recognize as greater because I am a particle of it. It calls to be recognized,

to be served and to shine through me ... There is a cosmic need for the new being that I could become.”

On the spiritual journey, which leads ultimately to no self, it is the function of the ego to consent, submit to the silence more deeply, will to this Work and let go more completely, until I consent to the vast stillness for the last time and I am one with the Source – the infinite silence and stillness from which we all emerged. This is my wish.

With continued daily practice, I observe that I am less subject to self and more attentive and intentional, increasingly able to remember more often and more completely submit to the higher consciousness awaiting my attention, always choosing, shifting away from the controlled known and toward a New Man – a second body.

Everything indeed is for you (and me), so that the grace bestowed in abundance on more and more people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God. Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:15-18 

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

A TEMPLATE FOR PRACTICING CONTEMPLATIVE SERVICE

BY SHERI BANEK

I have been part of the Contemplative Response Team (CRT) for many years. The Church of Conscious Harmony created CRT for providing contemplative service for our community. With its foundation in Centering Prayer, here are the steps and a few best practices for moving contemplative service into our ordinary world, with anyone, anywhere.

Using the Four Steps of Centering Prayer as a guide for selfless, contemplative service, we prepare to meet and serve Christ in another.

Intention: Our “yes” comes from a genuine desire rather than an obligation. By focusing one’s attention and intention on serving Christ in the other, Spirit leads the way. We may introduce the person’s name as our sacred word to stay focused on them, helping us remember they are sacred. They are whom this contemplative service is about; therefore, we must be ready by self-observing and non-identifying with all our internal

desires to fix things or clean it up or escape.

Like Thomas Merton, “The more I am able to affirm others, to say ‘yes’ to them in myself, by discovering them in myself and myself in them, the more real I am. I am fully real if my own heart says yes to everyone.”

Presence and Consent: Before visiting a beloved, become present, leave behind previous events of the day and remember God’s presence: *Wherever we are, God is, and all is well.* You might consider standing at the threshold and emptying yourself.

As Fr. Thomas Keating writes, “Kenosis or self-emptying love, is another way of expressing contemplative service. It is love that gives itself away for love’s sake. We learn how hard it is to do this when we attempt it and we recognize our limitations as givers and receivers. Participation in contemplative service helps us to realize ourselves as servants and follow the model of Jesus. Attempting to serve in love, we get a small glimpse of what is not

love within us, of what needs to be emptied from us.”

Return: When we become distracted, uncomfortable, unsure or identified with our own feelings, we can return ever-so-gently to the person’s name as our sacred word. We can return to realizing we are serving Christ, returning to oneness, returning to love.

Remain: After visiting with someone, pause to remember God, give gratitude and to process anything that arose. Fully feeling creates energy for our awakening. When one is truly present in contemplative service, we often feel we are the ones being ministered to. It is then that we understand that we really are One.

Fr. Keating reminds us, “Charity, that is showing love, is the greatest investment there is ... You will reap the return from your investment on higher levels of consciousness, inner freedom, and the joy of service, which Jesus seems to say, if you do it right – for the love of God – is the greatest happiness there is.” ☸



Ego sum, nolite timere. (It is I, do not be afraid.) John 6:20

FOUNDATIONS

BY MARY ANNE BEST

SELF IN CHRIST 2012

In so far as we desire, with Christ, that the Father's will may be done in us, as it is in heaven and in Christ, then even the smallest and most ordinary things are made holy and great. And then in all things the love of God opens and flowers, and our lives are transformed. This transformation is a manifestation and advent of God in the world. Thomas Merton

We all have the innate capacity to manifest God because we already are that image by virtue of being created. Thomas Keating

In Tim's annual aim letter, written in January 2012 for the community, he shared why we have annual aims: "If you're a newcomer to our community and haven't participated in our previous annual aims, you may wonder why we have aims and why we share them as a community. Simply put, our lives follow our attention and where our attention goes determines our experience. Strong intention and directed attention are critical to the spiritual journey. If we allow randomness and whim to draw our attention just anywhere, the experience of our already existing union with God will elude us. To paraphrase a saying from the great Sri Ramakrishna, 'If you don't know where you're going, you will end up somewhere else.' And as to why we hold our aims as a community: it

is simply that there is strength in numbers and we don't all forget on the same day."

Tim went on to say: "The capacity and opportunity to choose is given to each of us by God. The choice is for each of us to make. We are served in that choice by the power and strength, of our community of many selves in Christ. I pray that you will choose to join us."

In 2012, we put on the aim of "Self in Christ" as a community. In addition, we raised \$50,000 for the creation of the memorial trail, the enhancement of the sanctuary sound system and the creation of a Centering Prayer scholarship fund. We moved deeper together as a community of intention, practice and devotion.

The fruits continue to this very day. May it continue to be so. ☺



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

THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

JUMP WITH FAITH

BY TAMARA FIELD

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

In the Work of Inner Christianity, we are encouraged to “jump for the rope.” A type of faith that calls us to believe in what we know as the truth. Yet we can only do this with the knowledge and the ability to apply our knowledge to our being, which creates understanding. Without the knowledge, we cannot possibly jump for the rope. How can we do what is possible without the understanding we know to be true? When I want help from higher influences and remember to jump for the rope, I must have faith that the rope will be there for me. Without the truth, there is no faith.

Now faith is ... the evidence of things not seen is about the distinction between belief based on internal conviction versus external validation. In this sense, faith is described as confidence in something you cannot directly observe or prove with physical evidence. The Bible passage is asking whether you are strong enough in your own convictions

to trust what you know or believe internally, even when the world around you does not offer concrete proof or agreement. It is a challenge to consider how much we depend on outside confirmation (from people, society, or facts) to validate our understanding, or if we are secure in what we know and believe, even without external support.

When I remember, I always have the choice to “reach for the rope,” because deep down, I absolutely know we are all connected to a higher purpose. Our inner essence is divine, and God is working through me (and you) to fulfill our destinies. This destiny is our essence expressing itself through our soul, constantly reminding us of who we truly are.

By combining deep knowledge of the Work and understanding of everyone’s connection to Christ, I move toward becoming whole – the wholeness we were initially created to be.

Through self-observation, non-identification, and Self-remembering, I recognize that I am not bound to the horizontal. I am a spiritual being living in this physical world, and God calls me to seek the truth and to return to the vertical – to have faith.

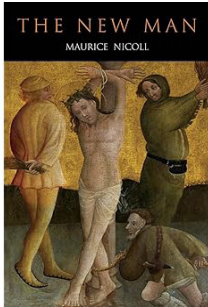
In the *Psychological Commentaries*, Maurice Nicoll says: “If he looks up, he will see a rope above his head. To catch this rope, he must jump. It is just this jumping to catch this rope that the word payment or paying the price refers to. Some people think that it is a sudden thing that happens only once, or does not happen. This is quite wrong. It is happening all the time, every day, when, swamped with your mechanical reactions to life, you have to jump, to lift yourself to get above your machine.” ☸

COMMUNITY PRACTICE

SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER: PRACTICING SOLIDARITY

As we take in the world with open minds and open hearts, let us remember that we are interconnected to one another by a divine presence much greater than ourselves. We are invited to practice solidarity together, calling God into our awareness, keeping watch with Christ who is in all. Is it better to be right or in relationship? May we remember to continue welcoming and affirming the One who is the heart of all creation. ☸

CORE FOUNDATIONAL BOOKS



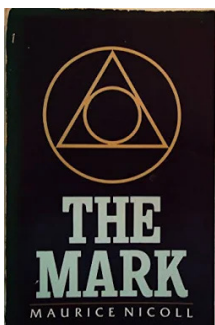
*The New Man: An Interpretation of
Some Parables and Miracles of Christ*
by Maurice Nicoll

This classic work conveys that the true purpose of life is inner development along with working to transcend the violence that characterizes mankind's present level of being.

All sacred writings contain an outer and an inner meaning. Behind the literal words lies another higher range of meaning, a higher form of knowledge. Nicoll elaborates on the Gospels in light of this inner truth. *The New Man* helps guide Man and Woman along the necessary journey each must undertake – to avoid violence and self-destruction by developing a *new* level of being within oneself. Ⓐ

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.

COMMUNITY READING SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER



The Mark, a companion book to *The New Man*, was published after Maurice Nicoll's death. Both are essential reading for anyone studying the Work of Inner Christianity. *The Mark* discusses, in relation to the Gospels, the ideas of inner transformation and missing the mark (failing in one's purpose).

The book's preface was written by Jane Mounsey, Maurice Nicoll's daughter. She notes: "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. ... 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." Ⓐ

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

- ❖ 1/2-day Centering Prayer Retreat
Wed, Nov 6 1-4p Register online
- ❖ New Member Induction
Nov 10 10am worship service, followed by
a reception
- ❖ Centering Prayer Retreat
Nov 16 9am-3pm Register online
- † Gurdjieff Music
Nov 17 7-8pm

Advent Centering Prayer Retreat
Dec 3-8 at Cedarbrake Register online

Advent 3-day Centering Prayer Retreat
Dec 13-15 at Cedarbrake. Register online.

MONTHLY

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

WEEKLY

- Wednesdays
 - ❖ Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm
 - † 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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AWAKENING OF THE EYE OF FAITH

*The earth is full of the love of God... He spoke and it came to be.
... The plan of the Lord stands forever,
The designs of His heart through all generations.
... Blessed, blessed, the chosen ones.*

cf Psalm 33:5, 9, 11-12

The awakening of the eye of faith, which is the awakening of the contemplative process, is to begin to see the Divine Presence in everything. You see everything as it is, but you also see it in its Source and the presence of God and then you are meeting God in the physical presence of other people and things. This is the Presence that predominates in deep prayer or contemplative prayer and when it's pretty well established, the fruits are available in everyday life in the awareness of the presence of God.

To see God as present is an enormous elevation of the capacity to see because it's seeing the Source and the Love and the Person of the Trinitarian relationships that are present in the smallest particle that we know of and beyond. A new level of Christian life opens ... doing what has to be done without self-reflection. This is non-duality. This is heaven on earth.

Thomas Keating, *God is Love: The Heart of All Creation*

