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# The Mark

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



**ATTENDING TO CONSCIOUS  
ALIGNMENT**

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*For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. 2 Corinthians 5:19*

## ANNUAL AIM: HOLY RECONCILING

ATTENDING TO CONSCIOUS ALIGNMENT BY JACK STAMPS

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Man remains a mystery to himself.  
He has a nostalgia for Being,  
a longing for duration,  
for permanence, for absoluteness –  
a longing to *Be*.

Yet everything that  
constitutes his life  
is temporary, ephemeral, limited.

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

God, Life and  
Creative Intelligence are all beyond  
the ordinary world  
of things and persons.

They belong to a reality  
that is more than personal.

Suprapersonal reality  
is hard to see and hard to express;  
but it really matters to us  
because it affects the meaning  
of our lives.

It is real in practice  
and can be found in practice.

J. G. Bennett, *Sacred Influences*

*The earth is the Lord's and all it holds,  
the world and those who dwell in it.*

Psalms 24:1

“Whoever wishes to learn to love his neighbor  
must begin by trying to love plants and animals.”

George Gurdjieff, *Views from the Real World*

As I look out at two plants on  
my front porch, I notice they are  
withering. By neglecting to water  
them, or as the monthly focus  
states, not attending to them, they  
will soon die. I will water them,  
prune away the dead leaves, and  
hopefully, as has happened in the  
past, they will slowly regain vitality.

Living in a home with two  
energetic terrier puppies, my  
beloved and I are in a mostly  
constant state of attending to them.  
For me, the path of attending  
can go in two directions. For  
instance, when I come home to  
find gnawed patches of wallboard  
or their “mistakes” on the floor, I  
can respond in total unconscious  
misalignment – with the negative  
part of my emotional center taking

over and manifest anger.

The other path that I have  
recognized through non-critical  
self-observation in those instances  
described above, coupled with  
a wish to bring the Work of  
Inner Christianity teachings in  
as reconciling force, is more in  
conscious alignment with an aim  
to open the door and address  
whatever surprise the puppies  
have in store for me. Recently  
when I came home and observed a  
pound of pasta splayed out like the  
pickup sticks game on the kitchen  
floor, my emotional center was  
correctly aligned with my moving  
and intellectual centers and sensed  
the beauty of the scene. With gentle  
calmness, I took a picture of it,  
greeted them with kindness, picked

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up a broom in peace and attended to their artwork.

In Bob Hunter's book, *Rogue Elephant*, he chronicles how Beryl Pogson taught that the traditional way of training a wild elephant, which is by harnessing a tame elephant to either side of it, suits the Work purpose very well. She explained that we could not control our behavior and attitudes directly through our feelings – for we cannot guarantee they will not suddenly burst into displays of anger, jealousy, hate or fear – we could use the other two functions to bring emotional center into harmony.

The Work has taught me that a person must become balanced in all three centers: emotional, intellectual and moving. Through self-observation, a person can determine which centers are most developed and which is least. And by working on the least developed, a person can come closer to conscious alignment of the three. After recognizing myself, in order, as an intellectual, moving and then emotionally developed person, I began attending to the development of my heart center. I bought illustrated Rumi poetry books and read them to Jackie. On a trip to the Blanton Museum, I

changed my method of perusing art. Before, I would go from painting to painting, first looking to see who the artist was. If I didn't recognize the name, I would pass on to the next. I did a lot of passing. In a more recent visit, I passed from painting to painting, sculpture to sculpture, not even noting the artist until the artwork had made its impression on me. This was a clear recognition that efforts to bring my emotional center into alignment with the other two had borne fruit.

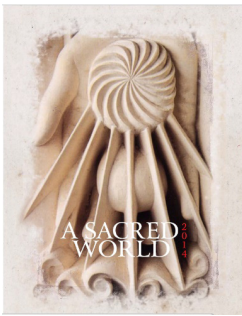
In 2003, as a member of the Tenth Man School (predecessor to The Journey School), I was introduced to the Gurdjieff Movements. Our teacher, Nella Liska, came down from New York once a month to instruct these sacred dances and exercises and selected members of the school would teach them weekly. Attendance was mandatory and I was not a happy camper. Bitterly complaining to my beloved about how they did not make sense, how I would never be able to remember the positions and, as my false personality hated to be required to do anything, angry that absenteeism was not an option.

After the third or so class, as I was stubbornly attempting to learn the movement *Lord have Mercy* with

my body stiff as a board and my jaw set, the music suddenly pierced my heart. Tears, which until then were practically non-existent for my being, flowed down my cheeks. The sensation of my body softened, my intellect sensed the immense value of what was being offered to me and to the whole class, and in that one brief but eternal moment, I was attentive to the conscious alignment of my moving center, my intellectual center and my emotional center. The music, acting as reconciling force, came in to replace the former third force of a lifetime of mechanical reactivity.

I became aware that participation in the Gurdjieff Movements served all three lines of the Work – working on myself, working with others and working for the Work itself. That the instructor, the class, the musician and I were consciously aligned and that each of us, regardless of where we were internally at any moment were a part of an organic whole.

I have been profoundly blessed by my 25 years as a member of this community. The Church's core teachings of the Work of Inner Christianity and the daily practice of Centering Prayer, the most heartfelt form of Holy Reconciling, is miraculous to me. ☉



# FOUNDATIONS

A SACRED WORLD BY MARY ANNE BEST

In 2014, we expressed a wish for embodied spirituality in a sacred world. The invitation was to join in community, to participate in intention and will to God, to renew our commitment to the spiritual journey, and move ever deeper together as a community of intention, practice and devotion. And, in so doing, manifest conscious harmony with all life.

We reflected on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's excerpt from *The Divine Milieu*, "Who can fail to perceive the great symbolic gesture of Baptism in the general history of matter? Christ immerses himself in the waters of Jordan, symbol of the forces of the earth. These he sanctifies. And as he emerges, with the water which runs off of his body, he elevates the whole world."

Tim Cook invited us to remember: "Our spiritual journey will fulfill its purpose as each of us returns our own feeling of 'I,' our self-sense to the very body, now matured, from which it departed in childhood into that 'far county' of a self-concept or disembodied image of a self. Re-embodied, we join the legions of those who, before us and

those who will follow us in returning our feeling of 'I' to our bodies and joining our lives to The Life and The Light of the risen Christ who awaits discovery within each human person. Each of us is a cell in the Body of Christ. All bodies are his body. The earth and the entire cosmos are his body. Holy, holy, holy is his temple."

In unison, we explored the aim to abide harmoniously in a sacred world through these monthly focuses:

- Incarnation
- The sanctification of time
- Acts of contrition
- Devotion
- Acts of giving away
- The grace of nature
- The miraculous in action
- The starry heaven at night
- The sacrament of the present moment
- Vocation
- Reverence for the elderly
- The Unknowable Mystery

We noted that all is at once mysterious and remarkably simple: the bestowal of being. "Just to be is a blessing; just to live is holy," said an incredibly wise man. And so it is that we take this heritage with us today. ☉



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

# THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

MY RESPONSIBILITY: TO ALIGN BY JO FUENTECILLA

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In the *Commentaries*, Nicoll says, “We all connect intelligence with the appreciation of meaning. Intelligence gives a relation to meaning. A feeling has meaning. A thought has meaning. A sensation has meaning. A movement has meaning. All different meanings. Are intelligence and meaning connected? You see a snake, you think of a snake, you feel a snake, and you run from a snake. These are sensation, emotion, thought, and motion. This is four intelligences at work together. Man is created a self-developing organism, his growth depends on his getting in contact with higher influences from above, and separating himself from forms of thought and feeling that hold him down to his present level.” (p. 393)

In this Work, we have to move consciousness more and more internally. “Your heart knows much more about you than your head does.” (p. 1659) With practice, one can come out of their head or thoughts and deeper in the heart and body, creating balance in

three centers.


First, take a look inside your inner world. Start to develop an “observing eye.” Begin with self-observation in all three centers (thoughts, emotions, physical sensations). When something comes up, I must feel it. Allow it to be. Welcome it. Uncritically observing develops an inner sense.

Secondly, non-identify from it, name it. Say to it, for example, “This is called being fearful.” Begin telling the intellectual center, “This fear is not I.” Then tell the emotional center, “this fear is not I.” Lastly, tell the physical center, “this fear is not I.” Feel the tension dissipate. When separation is made from fear, a certain energy is freed up that can be used for healing or transformation.

Third, is Self-remembering. This step moves you and me to a new area of existence. We were all born innocent. When I truly believe and know that I am a child of God, a co-creator with Christ, that I am kindness, that I am love, then I start to Self-remember. Feel the vibration

of Self-remembering. The harmony and alignment within, with people and with your true purpose. “The Work calls this Neutralizing Force, Connecting Force, Harmonizing Force, Relating Force, or simply ‘Third Force.’ To become conscious in Third Force is mercy and release.” (p. 1656)

The Work teaches us how to become good self-observers. It teaches us how to make “essence” active so that it can grow and make contact at a higher level with Real I. “The aim is *contact* – not ‘being good.’” (p. 1646)

Conscious alignment involves the realization of your essence, beyond thoughts, emotions or sensations. As I become quieter and more conscious, suddenly, I am living in awareness of this finer energy. Michel de Salzman describes it perfectly, “I begin to feel my responsibility. To be aligned with this energy brings consciousness, love, and will. My responsibility: to align. Come to what is essential, this unknown, this mystery.” 

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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

DEVOTION, SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION BY BARBARA COOK

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Humanity has been called to be transformed. Jesus Christ invited everyone to participate in the regeneration, and this Church community was founded on that call. We aim to offer ourselves to God's plan to transform the entire human race from worldly beings into sons and daughters of the most high. We were given Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina and the Work to use as tools for our active participation in the dismantling of our false selves. And still, it took us many dedicated years to actually become what a Christian Contemplative Community is.

As Fr. Thomas Keating advised, this is not a magic carpet ride to bliss or a quick fix, but rather a lifelong relationship with the Divine on his terms. Father knows best and we are his sheep or little children. Those of us who accept the offering can testify that we do have a deeper relationship with God, and although it is a long, sometimes tedious and boring journey, it is also a rich, rewarding, amazing, transforming and grace-

filled life.

This journey, which goes geographically from the head to the heart, can easily become an ego trip if one does not use the advice of wise elders. Fr. Keating advises us to keep our attention between two banks on the river of life, to keep focused and aligned. These banks are devotion and service. Devotion might be seen as faithful adherence to our regular practices that open us to God: Centering Prayer twice a day, reading scripture and other spiritual texts, and participating in God-centered community activities. Service to others and our community flows from our experience of the fullness of the fruits of the prayer and should first begin with those whom we live with, before spreading out as God directs. This eventually becomes contemplative, selfless service or seva.

As humans, we have been called to be transformed, and through Christ, we have been given the Way. Here at The Church of Conscious Harmony, we have

focus, tools and direction. This call is not just for an elite few, but for everyone and anyone who is willing to consent and participate. What an opportunity we have been given. God has offered to transform us by the renewing of our minds; to die to the old self and be reborn in the Spirit. We can be the change that we want to see in the world – it is ours for the having. I pray we will continue to say yes! ☸

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## SERMON SERIES RENEWING INTENTION

Please join us and our new devotional minister, Jonathan Steele, as we reflect on the intentions that guide our journey with God. What drives our desire for transformation? How can we align our motivations more fully with God's loving vision for our lives? Together, we will journey toward deeper clarity of intention, renewing our commitment to a life of grace-filled transformation into Christ. ☸

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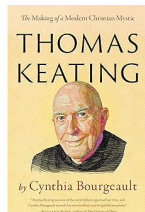
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# COMMUNITY READING

JANUARY-APRIL

*Thomas Keating: The Making of a Modern Christian Mystic*

by Cynthia Bourgeault



This book is a compelling portrait of Thomas Keating's spiritual journey, an evolution from a Trappist monk to a modern-day Christian mystic. It delves into his development of Centering Prayer, and highlights his engagement with nondual spiritual practice, interspiritual dialogue, and his teachings on transformation. Cynthia also covers his final "dark night of the spirit" and his passage through death, offering readers insights into his profound spiritual development. (A)

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## COMMUNITY PRACTICE

### PRACTICING ATTENTION/INTENTION

The practice of attention/intention begins with listening, consent and surrender and transforms into an ardent desire to know God's abiding Presence through prayerful attentiveness in the ordinariness of everyday.

**Attention, the how:** Bring your attention to the present moment in its immediate content and keep it there – in the presence of God. *Feel* yourself in the activity.

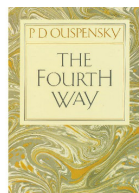
**Intention, the why:** Do what you are doing with God-devotion and love.

With daily practices and Grace, our lives are being transformed into Christ. (A)

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## CORE FOUNDATIONAL BOOKS

*The Fourth Way* by P.D. Ouspensky



This fascinating exploration of the teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff shows us a new way of living distinct from the three traditional ways to achieve spiritual enlightenment. The ways of the fakir, the monk, and the yogi each focuses on developing a specific aspect of the individual: the body, the emotions, and the mind, respectively. However, Gurdjieff proposed a fourth way, which integrates all three aspects and can be pursued in ordinary life without the need for isolation or renunciation. Key practices include self-observation, Self-remembering, and working with others in a group setting. Ouspensky emphasizes the importance of balance and integration for personal transformation and spiritual growth. (A)

This is one of 23 books that CCH recommends as essential reading for growth and transformation on the spiritual journey. Display copies are in the Praxis Center.

## FEBRUARY CALENDAR

For more details,  
visit [consciousharmony.com](http://consciousharmony.com)  
or call 512-347-9673

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Meetings with Remarkable Men Reading Group  
with Robin Bloor (online only)  
Mondays, Feb 3-May 19 7-8:15pm  
Open to all Register online \$160

❖ Centering Prayer Retreat  
Feb 8 9am-3pm Register online

❖ Intro to Centering Prayer Course  
Feb 8 9am-noon; optional 12:30-3pm retreat  
+ 4 consecutive Tuesdays 12-1:15pm online  
begins Feb 11 Register online \$15

❖ Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat  
Feb 12 1-4pm Register online

Half-Day Centering Prayer Online Retreat  
Feb 22 9am-noon Register online

### MONTHLY

1st Sundays Caritas Donations  
Bring non-perishables to CCH  
or donate to [caritasofaustin.org](http://caritasofaustin.org)

### WEEKLY

Wednesdays

- ❖ Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm
- \* Online Caregiver Support Group 3pm
- ❖ Bereavement Support Group 4:45-5:45pm
- † 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

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\*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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## LIVING AS A HOLY SACRIFICE TO GOD

*Brothers and sisters ... Don't live the way this world lives.  
Let your way of thinking be completely changed.  
Then you will be able to test what God wants for you.  
And you will agree that what he wants is right.  
His plan is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Romans 12:1-2

Our life is a mysterious interpenetration of material experience, spiritual reality and the divine presence. The key to being fully a Christian is to know Jesus Christ with the *whole* of our being.

How great it is to know his sacred humanity ... to treasure his teaching. But this is only the beginning. It is to the transcendent potential in ourselves – to our mind ... and to our will ... that Christ addresses himself in the Gospel.

The essential note of his passion is the emptying of his divinity, which was the culminating point of his life on earth.

We enter into his emptying by accepting the emptying process in our own life, by laying aside our false self, and by living in the presence of God, the source of our being.

Thomas Keating, *The Heart of The World*