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**CULTIVATING DEVOTIONAL
NON-DUALITY**

“Interior silence becomes presence.” Fr. Thomas Keating

SILENCE AS ENCOUNTER

BY JONATHAN STEELE

From a contemplative Christian lens, the invitation to practice and awaken to non-duality in our lives, brings us face-to-face with the nakedness of our inability to change ourselves and the paradox of being invited to be transformed into love. This apparent contradiction is reconciled as we allow ourselves to be seen and healed in the loving gaze of an other.

This might be sitting in silence with the Beloved, but I have found more often than not it is the witnessing of another trusted companion on the journey that does the trick. If we read the Gospels carefully, we see time and again that it was those who were in felt touch with their needs that invoked Jesus' compassion. It seems that God prefers working with what's real in our lives instead of our pretense.

So you might as well give God something real to embrace so that “all your deeds and words, each truth, each lie, die in unjudging love” to quote the poet Dylan Thomas. If any hallmark of or

pathway to non-duality exists, it seems to lie in the direction of at least recapitulating one's categories of good and bad. This includes our relationship to our perception of the felt sense of God's presence as good and the felt sense of its absence as bad.


As clarified in Cynthia Bourgeault's latest book, Fr. Thomas Keating increasingly learned to perceive the intimacy of the heart as a flowing oneness of unity and co-creativity between the Divine Unmanifest and Divine Manifest. And he did this through progressively shifting his preference for silence as the backdrop for hearing messages from God to, silence as the encounter itself.

In other words, Thomas learned to stare into the perceived emptiness of the Divine Unmanifest where the felt sense of God's absence not only becomes a new kind of presence but invites the responsibility of taking the deification or divinization process as a serious and mature goal of the Christian path; where, as Thomas says, “interior silence becomes presence,” no matter what activity

might be occurring.

As householders, this is where the rubber of intention meets the road of our obligations as parents, partners, caregivers, teachers, employers, colleagues and artists. How does the formal practice of Centering Prayer begin to manifest itself in our daily activity?

At some point, the commitment to our spiritual journey takes on a new seriousness where our intention moves us through a threshold that, by grace, seems to pull us into prayer without ceasing you might say. Dr. David Hawkins says, “There comes a time when you do whatever practice you're doing all the time. The devotion to the truth becomes overwhelming. The love for God pulls you. It isn't that you're being driven by it, it's that you're being pulled by it. That's your destiny.”

We truly then begin to co-create with the Divine nature, not one, not two, but unified in our being no longer divided by our contradictions. Like, Jesus, we vibrate as generative words of God. We rest in Silence as our home in both the midst of activity and none at all. 



communion

2017

FOUNDATIONS

BY MARY ANNE BEST

“Jesus Christ in His divinity is in the hearts of all men and women and in the heart of all creation, sustaining everything in being.

“This mystery of oneness enables us to emerge from the Eucharist with a refined inward eye, and invites us to perceive the mystery of Christ everywhere and in everything [in] the consciousness that is being transformed. Christ’s Spirit in us perceives the same Spirit in others.

In the Eucharist, all creation is transformed into the Body of Christ, united with His divine Person, and thrust into the depths of the Father forever and ever. Even material creation has become divine in Him.” Thomas Keating, *Contemplative Outreach News*, Winter 1997


In Him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible; ... all things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ... For in Him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things.

Colossians 1:16-17

The message for 2017 was the all-embracing **all** of everything in Communion. To know that all things that appear in the world or that have ever appeared in the world live together in the category of “allness” in the One. John’s

Gospel points to this staggering, world-transcending reality with simple, shining, and transforming words from the beginning:

In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light the darkness could not overpower. ... The Word was the true light that enlightens all men: And he was coming into the world. ... To all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God. ... to all who believe in the name of him who was born ... of God himself. John 1:1-5, 9-12, 13 (Jerusalem Bible)

A question was raised recently: Do I act as if **all** is connected to me? If so, I am participating in Communion and in the evolution of all creation. In Communion, the One unites us to himself and the entire cosmos. Each soul’s growth in God blesses the entire world whether in 2017 or in 2025. As each of us actively participates, we are doing our part to let Christ be all in all. 

The monthly Foundations column revisits historical materials and perspectives that are significant to the foundational principles, aims and intentions that ground our Church’s teachings, offerings and operations.



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ANNUAL AIM: HOLY RECONCILING

EMBODYING DEVOTIONAL NON-DUALITY

BY REY CARDENAS

Our discovery of God is,
in a way, God's discovery of us.
God comes down from heaven
and finds us ... We know God
in so far as we are known by
God, and our contemplation of
God is a participation in God's
contemplation of Godself ... We
become contemplatives when
God discovers Godself in us.

Thomas Merton *New Seeds of Contemplation*

Contemplation is the way
out of the great self-centered
psychodrama. When interior
silence is discovered, compassion
flows. If we deepen our inner
silence, our compassion for others
is deepened. We cannot pass
through the doorways of silence
without becoming part of God's
embrace of all humanity in its
suffering and joy.

Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land*

*The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let the hearer say, "Come."
Let the one who thirsts come forward,
and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water.*

Revelation 22:17

Bernadette Roberts writes
in her last book, *The Christian
Contemplative Journey*, something
to the effect of "non-duality doesn't
necessarily mean oneness. Directly
translated, it means *not twoness*." When I read this statement eight
years ago, it caught me by surprise. Bernadette goes on to suggest that
we approach non-duality not from
the perspective of oneness, but from
a trinitarian perspective. Given the
roller coaster ride that was fueled by
my misapprehensions around non-
duality that had landed me back at
the church of my childhood, I was
inspired to consider this perspective
more deeply.

My spiritual journey started 15
years ago as a yoga practitioner. I

found my way to the mat from my
cold, isolating profession of playing
poker on the internet. I had given
my dopamine over to the gambling
impulse and was accustomed to
doing psychological warfare in front
of a screen for sometimes 16 hours
a day. One day, while playing ten
poker tables at once, while playing
Xbox and surfing the internet, I
fainted in my living room. This
wakeup call got me onto a yoga
mat and I was hooked after my
first class.

A year later, I found myself
in teacher training where I was
exposed to the teaching of non-
duality. The idea of oneness inspired
me to be more caring and to look for
the positive in all things. Though I

glossed over a foundational aspect of the eight limbs of yoga, Ishvara Pranidhana, devotion to something higher than yourself, I abided from the perspective of self-love as the thing that enabled me to love others. Having figured out the secret to life, I felt special, proud and powerful.

It wasn't long before the shadow of my self-serving perspective on non-duality reared its ugly head. I was teaching yoga full-time and began following two teachers who were practicing a brand of left-handed tantra that said, "if it's all one, then anything goes." This perspective, along with a misunderstanding of how to relate to the "wisdom of the body" led me to an even lower place than before. Ironically, the physical, energetic, mental and moral degradation of this intense path, known as "the path of fire and ice," led me back to Christianity. I had a deep wish to be forgiven and a hunger to cultivate discernment about how to be a human in a non-dual reality. Remembering all the times my mom let me know that Tim and Barbara were asking about my well-being, I knew that I needed to return to my spiritual home.

Back at The Church of Conscious Harmony, I learned the Work of Inner Christianity ideas like the Law of Three and the centers (Intellectual Center - head, Emotional Center - heart, Instinctual Moving Center -

lower abdomen and physical body). I also became acquainted with Rudolf Steiner's teachings known as anthroposophy after finding out that he was an influential teacher of Valentin Tomberg. In my studies, I discovered a meditative teaching that revealed the wisdom of the physical body by illustrating how the bones associated with the three bodily centers reveal the nature of those centers.

If you were to draw a picture of duality, a polarized place where we experience the opposites, it would be a line with two opposite endpoints. If you look for this shape in your body, you will find it in the bones of your limbs. Of the three centers, the limbs are most closely related to the willing, or instinctual moving center because the energy needed to move your limbs is derived from the fire of digestion in the stomach. Nothing compels the body to act more than instinct. If you are hungry, your body is going to find food. If something seems dangerous, your body moves away. The instincts work through the limbs in a polarized way that is reflected in the shape of the limbs themselves.

Now, contrast the linear bones of the limbs with the skull. If you imagine a shape that depicts wholeness, unity, non-duality, you will probably call to mind a sphere. In the esoteric Pythagorean geometric tradition, the sphere is the

archetype of equality because every point on the periphery is equidistant from the center. Someone who is one-sidedly in their head is often stifled towards inactivity due to daydreaming or indecision based on the multifaceted perspectives that the mind can experience.

Per Bernadette's suggestion, are we able to reconcile the apparent duality between the head, the site of our cold, calculating intellect and the digestive fire in the belly that fuels the instinctual moving center? Yes! The third force that warms and enlivens the cold intellect and cools fiery instinctual passions through empathy can be found in the emotional or rhythmic center located in the metaphysical heart. It is interesting to observe how in the linear curving ribs and the circular vertebrae in this region of the body, we see a bridge between the bones of the limbs and the bones of the head.

If the limbs thrive on movement and the head thrives on stillness, the heart thrives on rhythm. This could mean rhythmic breathing or partaking in consistent devotional rituals like Centering Prayer. Whatever it is, by utilizing the heart forces to harmonize opposite tendencies in the head and limbs, we give ourselves the beautiful, often fleeting opportunity to experience ourselves as a united individuality and thus catch a glimpse of the Divine. ☸


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

THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

INNER CONTRADICTIONS BY SANDRA ELY

Work Idea: When you begin to realize contradictions in yourself by direct, uncritical self-observation, your being is altering.

Commentary: “A buffer is a silent thing, comparable to a little wall intervening between two contradictory things, both of which we can be conscious of, but only one at a time, not simultaneously. ... Now it is said that whenever a buffer is seen it can never re-form—that is, when a contradiction due to a buffer disappears and both sides are accepted simultaneously a real change of being takes place. Instead of being conscious on one side and then on another side, which is a duality, two sides come together and form a unity. But in that case neither one side nor the other remains the same. A third thing is made which is not Yes *or* No but Yes *and* No. This is one of the first steps towards unity of being because our being at present is, as it were, a duality divided into an accepted side and an unaccepted side, ... into a side which for the moment is in consciousness, the other side being in darkness, and then into an opposite side. ...

“And, quoting Mr. Gurdjieff, he said: ‘Real Consciousness is a state in which a man knows all at once everything that he in general knows and only in this state can he see how little he knows and how so many contradictions lie in what he knows.’” 

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, pages 964-966.

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

CULTIVATING DEVOTIONAL NON-DUALITY BY MICHAEL TURNER

Cynthia Bourgeault describes how Western civilization shapes us with deeply embedded assumptions of hierarchy, levels, and stages of progress. Often, we apply such beliefs to our spiritual formation and our relationship with God. Efforts to reach non-duality are often framed this way, eyeing saints who devoted their lives toward “higher” piety and service. Bourgeault gently reminds us that sainthood is not about people reaching God, but God reaching us.

This hierarchical mindset begs deeper consideration – whether our focus on progressive development might mislead our capacity to rest in God ever more deeply. What if devotional non-duality results not from reaching some pinnacle of insight and understanding, but from different ways of relating to Spirit?

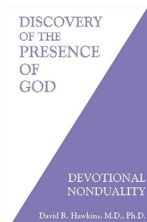
Thomas Merton decried notions of “ascending levels” on the spiritual journey while advocating our deepening capacity for love and relationship. Bourgeault reminds us that, “whatever best serves the needs of love in that moment is where the divine current will be flowing, even if it looks to our compulsively hierarchizing and judging minds like a step backward.”

Silence serves as one gateway to deepened love. Fr. Thomas Keating suggests the gift of contemplation begins with a new revelation of silence as presence rather than emptiness, a spaciousness vibrant with fine tenderness. Martin Laird concurs that compassion flows when we discover interior silence. Deepening interior silence comes with deepened compassion for others and deeper realization of God’s compassion for us. Love loosens our grips on assumptions about spiritual “progress” toward non-duality. May it be so. 

COMMUNITY READING

MAY-AUGUST

Discovery of the Presence of God: Devotional Nonduality
by David Hawkins, M.D., Ph.D.



Dr. Hawkins speaks of the evolution of consciousness from his lived experience and encourages assent by the will to a total surrender to God attesting to its possibilities. In his own words: “The evolution of spiritual consciousness in the individual seeker ... is both confirmable and subjectively experiential. ... The pathway of Devotional Nonduality is a direct course to Enlightenment via clarification of core essentials that merely await activation by decision, intention, and dedication of the will.” ☸

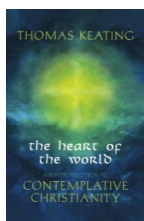
COMMUNITY PRACTICE

PLANT SOMETHING

Our Eastertide practice is to plant something. Not only in the earth, but in your time, your attention, your words. Plant in hope. Plant what the world cannot yet see. ☸

CORE FOUNDATIONAL BOOKS

The Heart of the World by Fr. Thomas Keating



This foundational book complements Keating's other writings by bridging the gap between Christian contemplative practices and the spiritual enrichment often looked for in non-Christian traditions. It focuses on the contemplative dimensions of traditional Christian concepts like sacrifice, redemption, salvation, and prayer, making it particularly appealing to those seeking a deeper understanding of their faith. *The Heart of the World* also discusses practices such as Lectio Divina, which help quiet the mind and prepare the heart for profound listening to the Divine within. ☸

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

MAY CALENDAR

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

SPECIAL EVENTS

❖ Art of Moving Meditation Enrichment
May 10 9am-3pm Register online

❖ Youth Communion Baptism In-Person Classes
Sundays, May 11-Jun 8 10:20-11:10 am
Baptism: Sunday, Jun 8
Contact Deborah Hale for details

❖ Adult Baptism In-Person Classes
Wednesdays, May 14-Jun 4 7pm
Baptism: Sunday, Jun 8 Register online

† In Search of a Way: Walking the Spiritual Path
led by Douglas Christie
May 16 6:30-8pm & May 17 8:30am-12:30pm
Register online

The Welcoming Prayer Workshop
May 30 7-8:30pm & May 31 9am-noon
Register online

MONTHLY

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

WEEKLY

Mondays

* Commentaries Class 7-8:30pm

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

* 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 GRACE OF THE ASCENSION



Title Unknown, by Ladislav Záborský

*When they had gathered together
they asked Him,
'Lord, are You at this time going to restore
the kingdom to Israel?'
He answered them,
'It is not for you to know the times or seasons
that the Father has established by His own authority.
But you will receive power
when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,
and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.'
When He had said this, as they were looking up,
He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him
from their sight.*

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1:6-9

Christ disappears not into some geographical location, but into the heart of all creation. In particular, Christ penetrates the very depths of our being, our separate-self sense melts into his divine person, and we are empowered to act under the direct influence of his Spirit. Thus, even if we drink a cup of soup or walk down the street, it is Christ living in us, transforming us and the world from within. This transformation appears in the guise of ordinary things and of our seemingly insignificant daily routines. The grace of the Ascension is the uninhibited faith that believes that God's will is being done no matter what happens.

THOMAS KEATING, *MANIFESTING GOD*

