



THE MARK

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The Church of Conscious Harmony
A Contemplative Christian Community
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Suffering and Rebirth

by Tim Cook

Gautama Buddha, the Awakened One, enunciated his Four Noble Truths. The first is called, *The Truth of Suffering*. It states that existence, in all possible forms, is suffering and cannot bring satisfaction because it is impermanent. Our attempts to cling to, or avoid, the ever-changing forms of life cause us to live in a chronic mood of doubt, instability and uncertainty. Now, if we really stop and consider the profundity and totality of the Buddha's insight, we are brought face-to-face with an extremely challenging reality. Everything we do in our attempts to relieve our suffering actually only causes more suffering and can only do so. The stark reality of this situation calls for an extremely intelligent and difficult response, or the more common reaction of simply distracting ourselves from it and denying and repressing our experience of it. It doesn't really go away; we just stop noticing it. Denial creates a sort of "psychological callous" between our awareness and the experience of our suffering. It makes our consciousness dense and coarse. But there is a way for us to understand suffering as an invitation to an entirely new life.

Fr. Thomas Keating offers us an extraordinary insight: "Suffering and

death are not enemies, but doors leading to new levels of knowledge and of love. We grow by dying and rising again; by dying to where we are now and being reborn at a new level."

Maurice Nicoll, in the *Psychological Commentaries*, that teach us The Work of Inner Christianity at CCH, every Thursday evening, puts it like this: "Everyone suffers. Cheerful people assure you they never suffer. They are always bright, healthy, and so on. Yet they suffer, in spite of this rather tiresome picture of themselves. Everyone suffers *mechanically*. What is mechanical suffering? It is something quite different from conscious suffering. It is something so intricate, so devious, so apparently contradictory, so various, so subtle, so historically long-standing – in short, a habit – that we do not observe it. We do not see its continual, inner, private, petrifying action, like that steady drip of calcium charged water that builds up those strange pillars in deep caves between floor and roof. The Work teaches that we all, inevitably, have mechanical suffering and that this is the only thing we have to offer as sacrifice. In order to change, one must sacrifice something. Understand

clearly and ask yourself – if it ever does occur to you to ask *yourself* a question, which means that you will have actually to think for your self of the answer – I say, ask yourself this question: 'Can I possibly imagine that I can change if I do not give up, sacrifice, something?' This means simply that you cannot change if you wish to continue to be the same person. To change is to become different. If I want to go to London, I must give up being at Amwell.

"Now notice carefully what we have to give up. The sacrifice the Work seeks is that of our habitual, mechanical suffering. ...A man, a woman, the Work teaches, must sacrifice their suffering. Mechanical suffering leads nowhere. A man, a woman, cannot *awaken* if they retain this dreadful weight, their mechanical suffering, and nourish it, by a continual process of justifying it. In the Work sense there is no justice on this planet where everything happens in the only way it can happen. How can there be justice in a world of sleeping people – of people who are not yet conscious – of people who are governed by their negative emotions and finally by hate? Now how, when you begin to see your own mechanicalness in your own 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.’”

My personal, mechanical suffering went on and on for many years. And it seemed perfectly justified, responsible and even necessary. I seemed to see it all so very clearly and what I saw depressed me. What obsessed me in those days, I now know by the summary descriptive term, “the human condition.” I saw, and could not avoid being aware of never-ending war, persecution, oppression of minorities, poverty, injustice, racial discrimination, intolerance, violence, environmental degradation, suppression of women, economic imbalance, governmental deceit and the horrendous fact of cruelty to innocent animals. How could I possibly be happy in a world where these conditions were an historical norm? As I gradually awakened from the deep sleep from which I judged the world, I realized, in a moment of spiritual inspiration, that the world was not going to change to make me happy. If I was ever to become happy it would be with the world remaining exactly as it is and me doing the changing. I had to forgive the world. But how?

I could not do it by myself; the task was too overwhelming and I was way too small. But the Spirit showed me that the great work of forgiving the world had already been done; I simply needed to accept it and consent to it. As Jesus Christ spoke His singularly great utterances from the cross, *Father, forgive them, for they*


do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34 NIV) and *It is finished*. (John 19:30 NIV); He opened the Way and He has invited each of us to join Him. *I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.* (John 16:33 NIV)

Through Christ’s Oneness with every single human being, each of us is invited to join in that great overcoming, to surrender our judgments of the world and to join ourselves to Him through our common humanity. His invitation calls out to each of us from the Eternal Now, saying, *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.* (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV) The sorrow and suffering of the world go on but the great Mystery of Christ is that He joins us in our distress and takes the burden of it from us, leaving us free to join Him in extending the Father’s love to all the creatures of the world.

As we do our small but important part, joining with Him, we may realize that we are participating in the very real birth of something utterly new in each of us and in the world. St. Paul put it clearly in his letter to the Christians in Rome:

And we know we are going to get what’s coming to us — an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we’re certainly going to go through the good times with him! That’s why I don’t think there’s any comparison between the present hard times

and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what’s coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens. All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it’s not only around us; it’s within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We’re also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don’t see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy. Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God’s Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don’t know how or what to pray, it doesn’t matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. (Romans 8:17-27 The Message)

We don’t need to reinvent the wheel; it’s been invented. And we don’t need to overcome the world; it’s been done. We don’t need to forgive the world; it’s been done. We participate in that overcoming and forgiving every time we enter into silent intimacy with the God of the Universe through the transformative grace of Centering Prayer. 

CCH Bookstore

2012 Community Aim
Self In Christ

Loved Into Wholeness

by Barbara Cook

When we sit down for our daily periods of Centering Prayer we are opening ourselves to the love of God which is always present but rarely noticed amidst the distractions of our lives. We are also opening and consenting to His healing action within us. Fr. Thomas Keating reminds us that even though psychotherapy can be useful at times, only God can heal the deep wounds of our lifetime. Each time we pray we can remind ourselves that prayer is relationship with God and that His healing love bathes our deep wounds, even those we are unaware of. Though we may not have conscious awareness of this subtle but profound healing work, we can be sure that each time we sit in prayer, God is loving us into wholeness.

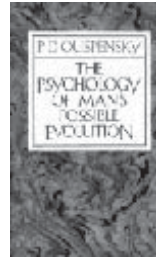
That awareness assures us that each time of prayer is a success as long as we don't get up and leave or deliberately think the thoughts that may be passing by. This divine therapy is an amazingly effective way to accept God's love and to be healed by His transforming grace. We simply sit, relax and ever so gently introduce our sacred word as our intention to consent to God's love and interior action. If we become aware that we've engaged

with thoughts, we just return with gentle intention to the silent inner expression of our sacred word once more consenting to God's healing love in action. This simple, utterly nonviolent action teaches us gentleness and non-judgment. Each time we gently return to our sacred word we are participating in an act of love.

These simple actions of opening to God's love, resting in that love, consenting to His healing activity within, and gently returning to our sacred word help us to let go of our old, worldly selves and open to our new selves, our child of God selves. This is where we learn to be like God, totally, unconditionally loving and self-giving. As Fr. Keating reminds us, we have billions of chances; so we just keep on keeping on with our daily practice with faith in God's infinite goodness and love for us.

As we grow steadily deeper, learning to be gentle to ourselves and to the others in our lives, we realize that we are God's representatives and that we are taking part in the changing of the world. We are learning to replace the violent ways of the world with utmost charity. Agape, Divine Love, starts with ourselves. ☸

Community Reading
(Feb 22 – Apr 08)
Journey To The Center
By Thomas Keating



Journey To The Center is the perfect companion for the 40 days of Lent. From the stark beginning of Ash Wednesday to the joyous climax of Easter Sunday, these meditations will feed your faith, renew your hope, and bless abundantly your journey of love.



The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution
By P. D. Ouspensky

This compilation of six lectures is an accessible but powerful introduction to the inner psychological work of the "School of the Fourth Way," and an account of some of its fundamental principles, methods and rules.

Bookstore and Library Hours
Monday-Friday 8:30 am-3:30 pm
Sunday 9:00 am-9:50 am &
11:30 am-12:30 pm



Annual Aim:

Self in Christ - In Sorrow and In Suffering

by Judith Strassman

My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done.

Matthew 26: 42

*Suffering and death
are not enemies,
but doors leading
to new levels
of knowledge
and of love.*

*We grow by dying and
rising again;
by dying
to where we are now
and being reborn
at a new level.*

Thomas Keating

*Suffering is a surer
and even more
advantageous road
than that of joy
and action.*

*... In suffering,
strength is given
to the soul
by God.*

John of the Cross

The Buddha, in his First Noble Truth, says that to be human is to suffer. In that sense, any one of us could have written this article.

When I returned to Austin after completing university, I rented a room from a wonderful artist, Dianne. It was the perfect starting place for establishing the next phase of my life; we got on very well. At a small dinner party we gave for mutual friends, I was serving drinks while Dianne got things ready in the kitchen. Lovely music was playing on the radio. Our friend Moe suddenly became very concerned.

“We need to turn off that music,” he said. It was ballet music – Tchaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty*. “Dianne’s daughter danced to that music. I think we should turn it off.”

Dianne had told me that her daughter died just a few years before, but she reported it so unaffectedly that I thought she had completely come to terms with it. I was assuring Moe this was the case, when Dianne came out of the kitchen. The

moment she heard the music she fell apart, unable to continue with the party.

Tall, elegant, and very talented, her daughter Lynne was receiving offers from dance companies worldwide, even though she was just a freshman at The University of Texas. I learned from Moe that as she was crossing campus to get to her next class she fell victim to the sniper in The University tower. “Wasted. Wasted.” was Dianne’s deep lament as I tried in vain to comfort her.

And I learned for the first time that there are some people walking through their lives, looking for all the world like they are just regular folks, but carrying a terrible black hole inside, a trap door that sends them back down into the original incident when they least expect it. For Dianne there was no “coming to terms” with it; it was a life sentence of grieving. I couldn’t understand it myself. How could I possibly help her understand?

continued on page 6

Later in life, my work with children in the hospital brought me in daily contact with the suffering of innocents. But I only really felt it when I met Danny, a bright four-year-old, in the Oncology ward. What a kid! Very smart, very funny, very adorable. Both his parents were with him as he was being tested for cancer.

I was with Dr. Milton when he told them that it was cancer, and in order to save Danny's life, he would have to have his leg amputated.

Everything in me was saying, "No! This cannot be true." I couldn't even imagine what his parents were feeling. But they pulled together as a little family unit, committing for whatever it took to save him. Danny took the lead, parenting his parents in an amazing way.

And Danny and I worked together in a special way, through play, to imagine what this new challenge would look like.

"What worries you about having only one leg?" I asked.

"I think maybe the other kids won't want to play with me," he said. "But I want them to know that I'm still me." Together we created imaginary scenes where he'd help his friends become more comfortable with the new Danny.

"I can't run with you now, but can you do this?" And he'd ask them to try out his crutches, or negotiate his wheelchair through a

maze. Our brain-storming gave me such admiration for his resourcefulness and courage and wit.

It was when we learned that the amputation was not enough, and the cancer was spreading too fast to save him that I broke down. With no spiritual understanding to lean on, I railed against a God who would demand everything from a little child before he had even begun his life, who would put him and his parents through unimaginable suffering and then take his life away as well. It seemed inconceivably cruel and unjust.

That was before studying the Work of Inner Christianity, before re-establishing my connection with Christ and His Church. These two incidents, and others, led me to pursue the reason for what seemed like meaningless suffering. When Tim Cook or Richard Rohr or Bernadette Roberts spoke of their understanding of this age-old human dilemma, I really listened.

It was some time later when I met Joe. I saw him almost every day at Mass with his wife, Kay. Immediately recognizable with his half-shaved head and prominent scar, he was undergoing treatment for brain cancer. It was his gentle manner and shy smile that endeared him to me. He was quietly taking the next step and the next step as they were being asked of him. Still only in his fifties, he

had stopped work to take on the required chemo and radiation treatments.

Over the course of months that I knew him, I could see the mental capacities dimming in him. Less and less of Joe was present and more and more of his essential Self emerged. But he did not disengage from life; this dear man now spent his time knitting caps for other cancer patients who had lost their hair.

"I don't know why this is happening," he'd say to me, not as a complaint. Just an observation.

The thing is, the same thing was happening to my husband at home. Slowly Harvey's capacities were being taken from him, the talents and training that had served him so well as a physician were no longer accessible to him. And he was suffering in those losses. In watching him struggle to accommodate these changes – less and less energy to do routine bathing and dressing, difficulty in breathing, diminished ability to put thoughts into words – I was suffering. It was like seeing a four-star general decommissioned and asked to step aside in the middle of a war.

I wanted Harvey to share my new understanding about suffering. I sat down and, pulling together what I knew, I wrote him a letter. But since Harvey did not believe in God and would not have understood it, I sent the letter to Joe.

Dearest Joe:

Who can understand the terrible mystery of God allowing you to suffer? God has asked you to take on this great burden. In saying “yes”

you share most intimately with the mystery of Christ’s own suffering, and you are brought closer to Christ than in any other way.

Like Jesus, you are giving up your own will, your own determination of how things should be. You release your hold on your life in preference to God’s hold on it. This includes the humiliation of appearing to others as helpless and incapable, needing to ask for help when once you were the helper. It includes seeing your family worry about you. It includes trying to find a place inside yourself to stand when you must endure real pain. It includes watching the one you love most, Kay, suffering with you, shouldering the extra burdens because you no longer can. It includes the dark anxieties about prolonged pain, progressive weakening, and death, which are yours alone. This is the very path that Christ walked.

And because we are all one in the Body of Christ, your willing suffering benefits everyone. We are lifted up by your having said “yes” to the will of the Father. In some mysterious way, your conscious suffering opens the availability of grace. In your suffering, God sets you as a counter-balance to all that is not love in the world.

In place of all that your are being asked to give up – your former strengths and abilities, your self-image, your plans for the future, you are given a new understanding, a new compassion for all who suffer, a new capacity to go slowly, to wait patiently, and to tolerate not knowing. You are given the gift of knowing, maybe for the first time, of our utter dependence on God.

The “yes” you bring to each of the experiences you would otherwise say “no” to, affirms as nothing else can that God is paramount in your life and nothing can dislodge Him from that position.

In Love,
judith

I see now that this letter was written to myself as well. It was a letter to keep me open in compassion, to help me support the burden I was all too ready to put down. It was a declaration of the truth that kept me engaged in Love with my true love. ☺

March Calendar

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

Special Events

United Day of Prayer One-Day Retreat
Mar 17 9am - 3pm
Suggested donation of \$25 to support
Contemplative Outreach. Pre-register at
www.heartoftexas-co.org or call 512.402.1002

Introduction to Centering Prayer
Mar 24 8:30am-3:15pm \$75 lunch included
6 follow-up meetings Tues nights at 7:30pm
beginning Mar 27. Pre-registration needed.

Monthly

Tuesday Enrichment 7:30 pm
Mar 6 Sacred Chanting
Mar 20 Gurdjieff Music

Community Workday
Mar 10 9 am - 12 noon

Weekly

Yoga
Tuesdays 1:30-3pm
Thursdays 6-7:15pm
Cost \$14 each session

Prayer Circle
Wednesdays 9:15 am

Contemplative Lunch
Wednesdays 12 noon

Mid-Week Communion Service
Wednesdays 6-7 pm

Introduction to Centering Prayer
Thursdays 7:30pm

Daily

Weekday Centering Prayer Service
M-F 7-7:35 am in Theosis Chapel

Bearing Suffering

by Francois Fenelon

Lovingly kiss the Hand that strikes you. Formerly you abused your health, and the pleasures that health gives. The weakness and the pain that now have taken the place of health are your natural penance. May God humble your mind even more than your body, and while he comforts your body according to its needs, may he entirely free you from your deceptions about yourself.

We are truly strong when we cease to believe in our strength, when we feel nothing but the weakness and the limited powers of our own spirit! Then we become ready to think we may be mistaken, and to confess that this is the case by correcting ourselves. Then our minds are open to the opinions of others, and we despise nothing but ourselves and our own ideas. We decide nothing, and we say the most positive things in the simplest tone and in a manner that is most considerate of others. We willingly allow others to judge us, we yield without difficulty, and we give the first comer the right to rebuke our correct us.

At the same time we never judge anyone except from real necessity. We speak only to persons who wish us to speak to them, we do so without laying down the law, as if we would prefer to be silent rather than speaking as if we took pleasure in our criticism.

This is the health I desire for you in your mind, with a real cure in your

body. And while you are waiting for this, bear your suffering with humility and patience.

Suffering Rightly


We know that we must suffer, and that we deserve it. Nevertheless, we are always surprised at affliction, as if we thought we neither deserved it nor needed it. Only true and pure love delights to endure, for nothing else is perfectly free from restraint. Resignation induces us to bear pain, but there is something in it that is afflicted in suffering and resists. The resignation that measures out its abandonment to God, selfishly reflecting upon itself, is willing to suffer, but is constantly examining to make sure whether it is suffering acceptably. In fact, the resigned soul is composed so to speak of two persons: one keeping the other in subjection, and watching, so that it will not revolt.

In love that is unselfish and abandoned, the soul is fed in silence on the cross and in its union with the crucified Savior, without any reflections on the severity of its sufferings. There exists only one single, simple will, which permits God to see it just as it is, without trying to see itself. It says nothing, does nothing. What, then, does it do? It suffers. And is this all? Yes, all. It has nothing else to do but suffer. Love can be heard easily enough without speech or thought. It does all that it is required to do, which is

to have no will when it is stripped of all consolation. The purest of all loves is a will so filled with the will of God that there remains nothing else.

What a consolation it is that we are then rid of so many anxieties about our exercise of patience and the other virtues in the sight of those around us! It is enough to be humbled and abandoned in the midst of suffering. This is not courage. It is something both more and less: less in the eyes of the ordinary class of Christians, more in the eyes of pure faith. It is a humiliation that raises the soul into all the greatness of God. It is a weakness that strips us of every resource in order to bestow upon us his unlimited power. "When I am weak," says St. Paul, "then I am strong." "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

When we are undergoing suffering it is enough to feed on some short sentences suited to our condition and our taste, with frequent interruptions to quiet the senses and make room for the inward spirit of recollection. We sometimes suffer, scarcely knowing that we are in distress. At other times we suffer, and know that we are not bearing our suffering well, but we carry this second and heavier cross without impatience. True love goes ever straightforward, not in its own strength, but counting itself as nothing. Then indeed we are truly happy. The cross is no longer a cross when there is no self to suffer under it and to appropriate its good and evil.

Reprinted from *The Complete Fenelon*, pages 140-141. Francois Fenelon was a 17th century French archbishop, and this book can be found in the CCH bookstore. 

Voluntary Suffering

by Jeanne de Salzman

We wish to be conscious of the inner Presence as a second body in us that must live its own life. It needs to have an action on our physical body and not be demolished as the body also lives its own life. For the moment, what is important is to let this energy grow in us, to take on force. We must feel that it needs a connection with a higher energy. The question is how to allow this new body to develop, how to absorb subtle vibrations until they saturate my Presence.

Our work is to be vigilant, to see what can sustain this body. This requires an attitude, consciously maintained, in which the largest part of my attention is held within, engaged in this desired penetration. This practice, which conserves energy, is an act of creation. The vision of what takes place in us is the most important thing. The result comes from this seeing and from the friction between opening to the unknown and the response of our functions. This is the beginning of a “crystallization,” the formation of something indivisible, individual and permanent – will, consciousness, “I.” I awake in order to be whole, to become conscious with a will *to be*.

The second body has as its substance a finer intelligence, a


sensitivity. Like the physical body it requires food for its development. A struggle, a conscious confrontation, is necessary to call an energy that would not otherwise appear. When our attention is strongly concentrated in front of the various movements of our thinking, feeling and body, this produces a substance similar to electricity. It is necessary to accumulate this material for a second body to be formed. The way is long, but the substance can be created in us by conscious effort and voluntary suffering. The new body will then have a possibility of action on the physical body. What is important is the continual struggle between our head and our “animal,” between our individuality and our functions, because we need the substance that this conscious confrontation produces. It requires effort again and again, and we must not be discouraged because the result of our work comes slowly.

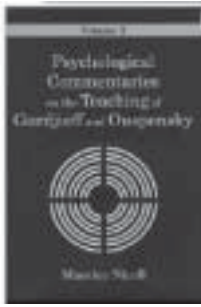
There is in us naturally a permanent conflict between the psyche and the organic body. They have different natures – one wishes, the other does not wish. There is a confrontation that we must reinforce voluntarily of our work, by our will, so that a new possibility of being can be born. It is for this that we undertake a task, something precise

that reinforces this struggle. For example, my organism has the habit of eating or sitting in a certain way. This is its conditioning, but I refuse to obey it. There is a struggle, a conscious voluntary struggle between a “yes” and a “no” that calls the third force, the “I” that is the master who can reconcile.

The body is an animal, the psyche a child. It is necessary to educate both, to put each in its place. I have to make the body understand that it must obey, not command. For this I must see what takes place in me. I must know myself. Then I can take a task that corresponds to my possibilities and exercise a conscious will. I create a struggle between the “yes” and the “no” for my being. Only at this moment does the work begin.

Our experience of suffering is never voluntary. It is mechanical, a reaction of the machine. What is voluntary is to place oneself in conditions that bring about suffering and to stay in front. A conscious man no longer suffers – in consciousness one is happy. But suffering thus prepared is indispensable for transformation.

Reprinted from *The Reality of Being – The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff*, by Jeanne de Salzman, a long time student of G.I. Gurdjieff. This book is sold in the CCH Bookstore. 



The Work

Making Suffering Useful

If you cannot see in yourself the tricks, manoeuvres and deceptions that another uses, you may find yourself continually at a disadvantage, being too easily taken in. You can only see through another person by seeing through yourself. In saying this, to introduce the subject of this paper, I have to emphasize again two Work-ideas – namely, that *our Being attracts our life* and that *we do not know ourselves*. This lack of self-knowledge is the rule in human existence and contributes volumes to Man's useless suffering. For the human energy expended in useless suffering, when seen in vision, is incredible and terrible. However, though useless to humanity, the energy is used elsewhere in this economical and totally unsentimental Universe, where nothing is wasted. Have you, by the way, begun to notice how much energy *you* actually waste in useless suffering? Perhaps you spent this morning being miserable, or sulking, or pitying yourself. Well, that is useless suffering.

....If you had sufficient self-knowledge you might see either that you need your kind of life or that you could make it different. Now only the Work can change your

Being. By knowing it, acknowledging it, and applying it to yourself, everything that happens to you can become intelligent. Consider identifying – are you free from it? Look how identified you are at this moment. Consider Self-Remembering – do you ever practice it? Consider a life-long grievance; consider a daily making of accounts against others; consider a life-long preoccupation with negative and unpleasant emotions; consider the Giants, Pride and Vanity, and what a mess they make and how they spoil everything; consider jealousy and hatred; consider your appalling ignorance; consider your fear of what people will think; consider your violence; consider your shifting lying – are you going to say you find nothing to work upon, nothing in this Work that applies to you? I have only mentioned a few things, but is your Being free from such things? Apparently it often is, for people ask me what they have to work on. The answer may be that they simply cannot observe themselves and they remain blind. They usually are very sensual thinkers who make reality a question of the sense. They have no internal attention. All the same, even if you are a very sensual thinker,

even a little consciously directed internal attention to what is going on in your may surprise you and shew you how little you know your Being and thus begin to change your idea of yourself. For is it not crystal-clear that *your idea* of yourself *must* change before *you* can change? Eventually, you must sooner or later *see through yourself* – this invented person you keep going at such cost – this you that is not you. This is *indeed* self-knowledge. In proportion as you do, so you will see through the tricks and manoeuvres and deceptions of others. Why? Because you will see them in yourself and yourself in them. Strangely enough, this frees you from their power – or it is standing too high in yourself and feeling superior that puts you so often under the power of others. Also, you are no longer surprised and indignant with others, which is a tedious and exhausting role to play. We seek to let the light into our inner darkness. The light heals us. It arranges things in the right order. This means we seek to be *more conscious of ourselves*. For example, I teach you to find in yourself what you judge so critically in others. You will get to know

what is in *your* Being in this way – what you never realized.

For many years before I met this Work I was Jung's pupil in Zurich. One of the useful things he taught was that we all cast a psychological *shadow* and that the beginning of the way to internal evolution lay in making the shadow gradually conscious. The shadow is the part of us that we are not conscious of, but must – with pain to both the pride and vanity, which is conscious suffering – eventually make conscious. It is absolutely necessary to face this shadow if we are serious. Of course it alters our idea of ourselves very much. This shadow, which is in everyone, can make havoc in our lives, as long as we are *unconscious* of it. As a part of our Being that we do not acknowledge, it attracts much that seems incomprehensible in our Life, owing to our not accepting it. A man without a shadow would be fully conscious to himself. He would have suffered usefully. ☉

Pages 1727-1730, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, by Maurice Nicoll. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the *Introduction to the Work* classes held every Thursday at 7:30 pm at The Church of Conscious Harmony.

SEEDS

How God Reveals Himself To You

The most usual entrance to contemplation is through a desert of aridity in which, although you see nothing and feel nothing and apprehend nothing and are conscious only of a certain interior suffering and anxiety, yet you are drawn and held in this darkness and dryness because it is the only place in which you can find any kind of stability and peace. As you progress, you learn to rest in this arid quietude, and the assurance of a comforting and mighty presence at the heart of this experience grows on you more and more, until you gradually realize that it is God reveling Himself to you in a light that is painful to your nature and to all its faculties, because it is infinitely above them and because its purity is at war with your own selfishness and darkness and imperfection.

by Thomas Merton

Originally published in *No Man Is an Island*,
pages 275-76

Guidelines for Christian Life, Growth and Transformation

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his seminal work *Open Mind, Open Heart*, lists 42 principles underlying the Christian spiritual journey. Fr. Keating asks that these principles be read according to the method of *Lectio Divina*.

One principle will appear in these pages each month.



8th Guideline

Grace is the presence and action of Christ
at every moment of our lives.

The sacraments are ritual actions in which Christ is present
in a special manner, confirming and sustaining
the major commitments of our Christian life.



A New & Inconceivable Reality

*For God so loved the world
that He gave His only Son,
so that everybody
who believes in Him
might not perish
but might have eternal life.*

John 3: 16



There is a shrine in Sri Lanka that Thomas Merton visited just before his death and where he received what he describes in his *Asian Journal* as the crowning grace of his Asian trip. He had gone to the east to seek Asian wisdom in order to enhance his contemplative Christian journey. He received at that shrine a remarkable enlightenment experience. He saw epitomized in that work of art the ultimate human achievement and the full realization of enlightenment – the possession of all knowledge in perfect freedom, peace and serenity – captured by the smile of ineffable peace. The smile was not one of indifference, but of utter compassion without emotional involvement.

The delicate smile transmits the Buddha's experience of unity to His disciples.

Now let us look at another image: Jesus dying on the cross, his lips contorted in the agony of thirst and suffocation. From those lips comes a cry of almost infinite despair, 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?' *Me!* that is, 'Your Son!' This is the ultimate double-bind: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, experiencing the utmost alienation that anyone could ever experience.

Let us compare these two states ... These are, as far as we know, the states in which each of them died. Which manifestation of God is greater? Who is this God who can be expressed in two completely opposite ways? Each expresses the Ultimate Reality in a way that no other human expression could manifest ...

God is present not just in serenity, not just in spiritual achievement;
God is also present in failure and the utmost suffering, and
He manifests Himself equally in each expression.

This, of course, is not the end of the story. Though Jesus died with the ultimate question still on His lips, He moved into a new and inconceivable reality. He is in unity with the Father and with everything that exists He is present everywhere, in everyone, in everything, and at the heart of all reality. Jesus is the Divine human being through whom everything returns to the Father.

Thomas Keating, *Awakenings*



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