

Greeting to all T'ai Chi Chih Practitioners,

I suppose there are reasons why we seldom talk about the practice of T'ai Chi Chih as being a spiritual practice, but that, in fact, is what it is! What intrigues me the most about T'ai Chi Chih is its spiritual benefits... and I am extremely careful in using the "S" word -- spiritual. Please don't get that term confused with the "R" word -- Religious. Some of you must have been concerned when it was announced in a letter of November 23, 2003 that Justin asked me, a Franciscan Sister, to take on a leadership role in the T'ai Chi Chih community as -- especially dressed the way I do. Justin says religion plays no role in T'ai Chi Chih, and I agree with him. Hopefully any concerns you might have had have disappeared over these past 6+ years.

As human beings we hold within ourselves the elements of mind, body, spirit and the desire to bring these into a deeper and more balanced connection. Actually they already are united, but in our western way of thinking we tend to separate and compartmentalize them.

In my role as T'ai Chi Chih Guide, I have traveled to many weekend or week-long retreats, responding to invitations to present T'ai Chi Chih -- assisting students to prepare them for Teacher Accreditation; making presentations at Retreat Centers, or in jails or in social groups -- and in every situation, students find themselves amazed and say how "spiritual" these movements are.

Another thing I've realized is that no matter who may be at a particular gathering -- whether they are novices unfamiliar with T'ai Chi Chih, or students that have attended one or many classes, Teachers who have just been Accredited, or even Teachers who have prepared and sent students for Accreditation -- each participant will receive, hear or apply what they personally need to bring their practice to a deeper level. When the Ah-ha's begin, or their eyes widen, it is then that the deeper connection is being made.

Connections happen when the principles are applied to the movements.

One of my favorite quotes of Justin's (those of you who have heard me before may elect to have it engraved on my tombstone) and that quote is:

"Trying is not the Way.

Not Trying is not the Way.

But you say it must be one or the other.

I say: Neither Nor."



[Odyssey](#)

My sense is that Justin gives us the "way" in talking and writing about the principles of movement, such as...

Flowing from the center with softness and continuity...

Which means:

Leading with the T'an T'ien^[1]

Yinning and Yanging -- shifting the weight completely

Applying the concepts of Circularity, Polarity,

And focusing in the soles of the feet.

So, when one develops and practices these daily in the T'ai Chi Chih form, the CHI is freed up and the purpose of doing T'ai Chi Chih - circulating and balancing the Chi -- is accomplished.

"When the individual energy (Chi) merges with the Universal Energy (Chi), something acts through one, and that something is infallible. This Prajna, the Inherent Wisdom. Give it theological terms if you will. Just as my Zen teacher said, "Love is Manifestation," so is "enlightenment" known by this manifesting, not by words, phrases, logic or dialectics...."

P. 83 The Mystery of Myo [Spiritual Odyssey](#)

When I tell T'ai Chi Chih teachers to "Sink into the Essence." This is what I'm referring to -- let T'ai Chi Chih do T'ai Chi Chih.

P. 84 The Mystery of Myo [Spiritual Odyssey](#)

Sinking into the Essence is vital to our daily T'ai Chi Chih Practice. May we be attentive, and let go at the same time.

May you experience abundant blessings in your practice and life.

Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF

Guide of T'ai Chi Chih

[1] T'an Tien -- explanation [Photo Text](#) pg.7 Seventh Printing 2007

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