CENTER VALLEY (April 8, 2007) – The secret is out. What had been, supposedly, the domain of only the wise and learned is now available “for the first time in history” to one and all. Through the wonders of modern technology and global marketing (and for only $30), “The Secret” promises to make all your wishes come true.

With “The Secret” thoughts become things. Ask the universe, believe that it’s already yours, and you will receive it. Luxuries, wealth, relationships, health – all are part of the universe’s catalogue open for your selection. From finding a parking space to being cured of cancer, anything is possible when you learn to attract these goods to yourself.

“The Secret” offers the prospect of being freed from any hereditary or cultural limitations. “Secret teachers” – a metaphysician, a quantum physicist, even a visionary – disclose the message and demonstrate the technique. Celebrity authors champion the cause and exemplify the benefits. By now more than 5 million people have bought it, literally (in print and on DVD) and figuratively. With “the secret” revealed, the new era, the last frontier begins … in, with, and through one’s own mind.

But what manifests itself today as New Thought in a New Age is actually ancient. Originating as first-century Gnosticism, the enticement of knowing the “mysteries” of life persists. Preferring the transcendental to the ephemeral, and focusing only on what is spiritual, this quasi-religious movement has now been repackaged with media-enhanced sights and sounds. Its new form even includes “secret treasures” and a “secret superstore” – all destined to channel the energies of the universe in your direction. After all, as one of the secret teachers proclaims, “you are eternal life.”

Ingeniously, the false hope engendered by knowing this secret is hard to disprove. Success and failure are both too easily explained, the former a result (or coincidence?) of positive thinking, the latter a sign that one has not yet mastered the law of attraction.
Today, Christians around the world celebrate a different mystery – the resurrection of Jesus. Belief in Easter has existed for nearly 2,000 years, and billions of people still adhere to it.

The Christian mystery begins not with one’s own visualization, but with the appearance of another – the one who had been crucified. Its truth is not metaphysical, but bodily – he who was dead is now alive. The law by which Easter attracts belief is not a wish, but a reality – one seen by just a few yet promised to all.

Still, the mystery remains. Whereas “The Secret” may be hard to disprove, Easter comes with no proof. Its power derives not from feelings, but from the affirmation of an event. For Christians, eternal life is not the result of positive thinking, but a gift offered by God and manifest in one who exists as “the way, the truth, and the life.”

Built on this faith, religious hope differs from the wishfulness of “The Secret.” Its source lies not in some malleable universal energy, nor even in the effects of human optimism. Rather, it is grounded on an act of divine sacrifice and is disclosed in the understanding of divine mercy.

Belief in the Easter event will not, of itself, bring fame or fortune. Human faith and divine grace do not free us from the vicissitudes of life. They seek, instead, to transform us in and through the realities of our existence.

One fact of that existence, sometimes harshly realized, is our own mortality. Try as we might, the eradication of sickness and disease will not result simply from a change in our thinking. Our individual and collective experience with cancer renders this painfully true.

Yet hope can still flourish. Here in the Lehigh Valley it does so through the work of a little-known organization called The Wellness Community (www.thewellnesscommunity.org/glv). Soon to celebrate its third year of operation, TWC offers programs of support and education to people affected by cancer, empowering them with vital skills to regain control, reduce isolation, and restore hope. Nearly 250 participants benefited from these cost-free services each month.

Humans will always be motivated by hope. In every age we dream of a better world, seek a happier life, and strive for a more peaceful existence. Some find hope in a new way of thinking. Others believe in it based on religious convictions. Whatever the case, our wellness as human beings always benefits from the care and concern we show to one another.