

CENTERING PRAYER

“Centering Prayer’ is a term used by Thomas Keating, an American Cistercian abbot, for his method of renewing an ancient Christian practice that goes back to the Desert fathers of the fourth century: repeating a prayer word in order to hold the mind still and let the deep inner silence where God dwells open up in the heart.” Cynthia Bourgeault

You begin by sitting down in your chair, eyes closed, body relaxed with your back straight.

Closing your eyes is a symbol of letting go of what is going on around and within you.

If you wish, you can start with a short prayer such as

“Into your hands I commend my spirit”.

But Centering Prayer actually begins when you start to say a sacred word, repeating it silently, gently.

The sacred word expresses your consent to God's presence and action within. The sacred word can be Jesus, Abba, love, listen, let go, faith, trust or any word that speaks to you in the present time.

If you cannot think of an appropriate word ask the Holy Spirit's guidance. Once the sacred word is chosen it is not changed during the prayer session as that would involve being engaged in thoughts.

Keep gently saying the sacred word.

You will find that thoughts, distractions, start to occur.

These are an integral, inevitable and normal part of Centering Prayer.

Just return to the sacred word.

By returning ever so gently to the sacred word a minimum of effort is needed. This is the only activity that is initiated during the prayer session.

You may find that in time the sacred word becomes vague or disappears which is positive gift.

It is recommended that each prayer session lasts for 20 minutes and that you enter into Centering Prayer each day.

At the end of the prayer time remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes, This additional 2 minutes enables you to bring the atmosphere of silence into everyday life.

If you have some kind of timer to set before you begin the prayer time it prevents you from interrupting this silence by looking at the time!

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The fruits of Centering Prayer are experienced in daily life and not during the prayer period.