



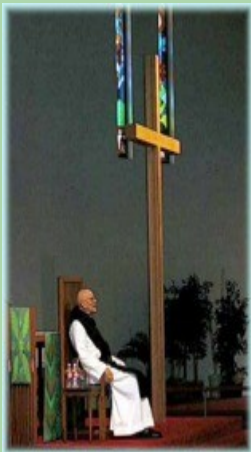
Centering Prayer Meditation Network Victorian Newsletter

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WHAT CENTERING PRAYER IS NOT:

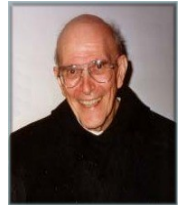
- It is not a technique.
- It is not a New Age phenomenon.
- It is not a form of self-hypnosis.
- It is not a relaxation exercise.
- It is not limited to the "felt" presence of God.
- It is not a charismatic gift.
- It is not discursive meditation or affective prayer.



The Centering Prayer Meditation Network in Victoria is part of the Centering Prayer Network Australia and Contemplative Outreach (America).

Contemplative Thought For Living

—An article for spiritual growth by
Fr Thomas Keating ocd



Breathed by the Spirit

Jesus breathed on his disciples on the evening of his resurrection saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit". There is thus no doubt of Jesus' intent and ardent desire to communicate the Holy Spirit to us.

Earlier Jesus had taught, "How much more (than ordinary parents who give good gifts to their children) will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Lk.11:13).

Thus there is no doubt regarding the intent and ardent desire of the Father to impart the Spirit to us. The traditional liturgical hymn to the Holy Spirit prays, "Come Holy Spirit!"—Veni Sancte Spiritus! Hence there can be no doubt of the Spirit's intent and ardent desire to be poured into the Body of Christ and into each one of Christ's members. Let every breath then be a cry for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the supreme Gift of the Father and the Son.

Let breathing be a way of participating in healing the sickness of the world paralysed by selfishness, exhaling the saving power of the Spirit into the abyss of darkness that surrounds the earth's atmosphere—the result of millennia of human brutality, violence,

malice, indifference, and injustice.

"Be effortlessly aware of the Ground of Being from which all things arise at each nano-second of time and which might be described as ever-present Awareness. Keeping silent watch." It is non-judgmental, simple, penetrating all reality; the backdrop, background, and source of everything, and the eternal Now beneath the apparent movement of time.

In Centering Prayer we do not try to reflect, analyze, or understand. We invite the Spirit to take over our mental faculties—memory, intellect, and will. We disregard all sense impressions and our emotional reactions. We remain inwardly and outwardly silent and still, with no attention to external stimuli or particular movements of the mind. We cultivate consciousness without any particular content. Our intention is to rest in God and to be united with everything that exists in the Source of all that is.

Ever-present Awareness does not do anything. It just is and sustains all that exists, letting all things follow their

innate nature and fulfil their created purpose. We do not need to make acts of knowledge or will to be in God's presence. At a certain point in contemplative prayer, to do so introduces a sense of separation from God or a certain uneasiness. Once God's abiding presence is stabilized, we might even feel as if we were withdrawing from oneness with the divine by such acts. Ever-present Awareness is not looking at us, but at Itself in us.¹

We may notice in everyday life an increase of mental, physical, and spiritual energy, and a certain quiet joy without knowing where it comes from. We feel detached from everything even while functioning in our customary ways. The past becomes inconsequential along with its contents, and the future is of no importance if we think of it at all. A sense of peace, freedom, spaciousness, and general well-being predominates.

In this context, we see that to seek rewards from God is a misunderstanding because we already have what is better than any reward. We are right now all that we can ever want or desire to be.

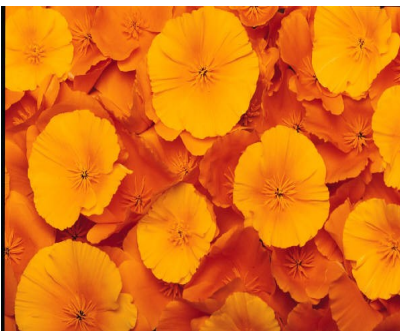
continued

We just think it isn't so. Stop thinking that thought and see what remains.

Relax into the all-embracing and boundless Presence of God which is beyond time, conceptual thinking, words, and actions but present in everything that exists and containing everything that exists.

Rest in the divine Trinity, in the bosom of the Father, in the heart of the Eternal Word, and in the infinite love of the Holy Spirit. This is the doctrine and experience of the Divine Indwelling, the most fundamental basis of our relationship with God.

1 Cf. Ken Wilber, *Eye of the Spirit*, Shambala, Boston, 1997,



Lectio Divina at Janssen Spirituality Centre—every Monday morning at 10am



"Lectio divina is an authentic source of Christian spirituality recommended by the Church. We therefore practice it every day, so that we may develop a deep and genuine love for it, and so that we may grow in the surpassing knowledge of Christ. In this way we shall put into practice the Apostle Paul's commandment, "Let the sword of the spirit, the Word of God, live abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts; and whatever you must do, do it in the name of the Lord."



Reflection:

God's first language is Silence. Everything else is a translation.

--Thomas Keating

Centering Prayer Guidelines

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts*, return ever-so gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

* Thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, concepts and reflections

The Four R's of Lectio Divina

Lectio (Reading the text)

Take your time and read the passage slowly. Get a sense of what it is saying. Listen for any words or phrases that strike you, and listen to your heart.

Meditatio (Reflecting on the text)

Read the passage again slowly. As you pause on the words or phrases that caught your attention, take time to consider what the words mean, particularly in your life. Is God asking you to act differently?

Oratio (Responding to the reading)

Read the passage for a 3rd time. Consider how God has spoken with you and respond back to him in your own words.

Contemplatio (Resting in God)

Take some time (10-15 Minutes) to simply rest in the presence of God.

Contemplative Prayer is normal

Contemplative Prayer is the normal development of the grace of baptism We may think of prayer as thoughts or feelings expressed in words. But this is only one expression. Contemplative Prayer is the opening of mind and heart - our whole being - to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words and emotions. We open our awareness to God whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing - closer than consciousness itself.

Contemplative Prayer is a process of interior purification leading, if we consent, to divine union.

For Further Information and

Resources Contact: Dr Stewart Sharlow

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"Together in Silence - Transforming the World"



Sheikh Kabir Helminski, Bhikkhu Ajahn Sona, Fr Thomas Keating, Rabbi Ted Falcon