

GUIDELINES

The most important thing to remember is that this is a practice. And the reason we practice is so that we can continue to deepen our relationship with God, not so we can perfect the prayer form itself.

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within, perhaps from the reading or another word that connects you to God.
2. Sitting comfortably with straight back and feet on the floor to allow for easy breathing. Then, settle in and silently introduce the sacred word.
3. When the bell sounds, follow the sound into the silence.
4. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word. If you fall asleep, simply return to prayer when you awaken.
5. When the bell sounds again to end the silence, allow yourself to come slowly back to the space. Remain in silence until the leader invites reflection.
6. Our reflection is a time is for you to notice the fruits of this prayer – what has moved within you and your own experience of opening to God.

RESOURCES

www.contemplativeoutreach.org They also have a free Centering Prayer mobile app

Open Mind, Open Heart: 20th Anniversary Edition (2006) by Thomas Keating

Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self (2013) by Richard Rohr

Desert Banquet: A Year of Wisdom from the Desert Mothers and Fathers (2011) by David G.R. Keller

Essential Writings by David Steindl-Rast (selected by Clare Hallward)

Eternal Echoes: Celtic Reflections on Our Yearning to Belong (1999) by John O'Donohue

CLOSING PRAYER

May we find peace with those we love,
growing together over time.

May we be at peace with ourselves
and with the labors that fill our days.

May we fashion peace in our world
with wisdom and gentle patience.

Blessed are you, God, who blesses us with peace.

Mishkan T'filah, pg 97

FIRST READING PSALM 145 FROM THE ST. HELENA PSALTER

A I will exalt you, O holy God, *
and bless your Name for ever and ever.
Every day will I bless you *
and praise your Name for ever and ever.
Great are you, O God, and greatly to be praised; *
there is no end to your greatness.
One generation shall praise your works to another *
and shall declare your power.
I will ponder the glorious splendor of your majesty *
and all your marvelous works.
They shall speak of the might of your wondrous acts, *
and I will tell of your greatness.
They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness; *
they shall sing of your righteous deeds.
You are gracious and full of compassion, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.
You are loving to everyone, *
and your compassion is over all your works.
All your works praise you, O God, *
and your faithful servants bless you.
They make known the glory of your realm *
and speak of your power,

That the peoples may know of your power *
and the glorious splendor of your dominion.
Yours, O God, is an everlasting reign; *
your dominion endures throughout all ages.
You are faithful in all your words *
and merciful in all your deeds.
You uphold all those who fall; *
you lift up those who are bowed down.
The eyes of all wait upon you, O God, *
and you give them their food in due season.
You open wide your hand *
and satisfy the needs of every living creature.
You are righteous in all your ways *
and loving in all your works.
You are near to those who call upon you, *
to all who call upon you faithfully.
You fulfill the desire of those who fear you; *
you hear their cry and help them.
You preserve all those who love you, *
but you destroy all the wicked.
My mouth shall speak your praise, O God; *
let all flesh bless your holy Name for ever and ever.

SECOND READING

Abba Isaiah the Solitary said, “Stand guard, then, over your heart and keep a watch on your senses, and if the remembrance of God dwells peaceably within you, you will catch the thieves when they try to deprive you of it. When a person has an exact knowledge about the nature of [their] thoughts, they recognize those that are about to enter and defile them, troubling the intellect (and our capacity to experience God) with distractions and making it lazy. Those who recognize these evil thoughts for what they are remain undisturbed and continue in prayer to God.”

Isaiah, a fifth century monk of Scetis, points to the heart as the place for discernment of influences that will inhibit our life with God. The beginning of “strict attention” is for a person to have “an exact knowledge about the nature of their thoughts” so that he/she becomes aware of “those that are about to enter and defile” the heart and, therefore, interfere with a person’s capacity to experience God’s presence and grace. This capacity of the soul was called the nous (translated “intellect”) and was distinguished from another faculty called dianoia (translated “rational thought”). Together they form a venue for the “strict attention” that is necessary to guard and care for the realm of the heart.

from Desert Banquet by David G.R. Keller (October 15)