

**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](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org) They also have a free Centering Prayer mobile app

*Open Mind, Open Heart: 20<sup>th</sup> 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 147 FROM THE ST. HELENA PSALTER

<p>Alleluia! How good it is to sing praises to you, O God; * how pleasant it is to honor you with praise!</p> <p>For you rebuild Jerusalem * and gather the exiles of Israel.</p> <p>You heal the brokenhearted * and bind up their wounds.</p> <p>You count the number of the stars * and call them all by their names.</p> <p>Great are you and mighty in power; * there is no limit to your wisdom.</p> <p>You lift up the lowly, * but cast the wicked to the ground.</p> <p>We sing to you, Most High, with thanksgiving; * we make music to you upon the harp,</p> <p>For you cover the heavens with clouds * and prepare rain for the earth;</p> <p>You make grass to grow upon the mountains * and green plants to serve humankind.</p> <p>You provide food for flocks and herds * and for the young ravens when they cry.</p>	<p>You are not impressed by the might of a horse; * you have no pleasure in human strength;</p> <p>But you have pleasure in those who fear you, * in those who await your gracious favor.</p> <p>Jerusalem will worship you, O God, * and Zion will praise your name.</p> <p>For you have strengthened the bars of our gates * and have blest our children within them.</p> <p>You have established peace on our borders * and satisfied us with the finest wheat.</p> <p>You send out your command to the earth, * and your word runs very swiftly.</p> <p>You give snow like wool * and scatter hoarfrost like ashes.</p> <p>You scatter your hail like bread crumbs; * who can stand against your cold?</p> <p>You send forth your word and melt them; * you blow with the wind, and the waters flow.</p> <p>You declare your word to Jacob, * your statutes and judgments to Israel.</p> <p>You have not done so to any other nation; * to them you have not revealed your judgments. Alleluia!</p>
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**SECOND READING**

Abba John the Dwarf said, “A house is not built by beginning at the top and working down. You must begin with the foundations in order to reach the top. The foundation is our neighbor, whom we must win, and that is the place to begin. For all the commandments of Christ depend on this one.”

The virtues are a rich but austere part of monastic life. A virtue is a core value, a deep root that feeds daily life. But what is the purpose of all the work it takes to develop the virtues? Is it spiritual progress? Is it to become a holier person? John is very clear that all this work is not an end in itself. These “foundations” support our relationships with other people. They are not directed toward self-reliance in our life with God. The foundation of our identity is rooted in “our neighbor, whom we must win.” Winning our neighbor does not mean controlling others for our self-interest but fulfilling Christ’s command to love others as ourselves. This commandment reminds us that love is the source of authentic relationships and the source of life-giving community.

*from Desert Banquet by David G.R. Keller (April 30)*