

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 VERSES FROM PSALM 107 FROM THE ST. HELENA PSALTER

We give you thanks, O God, for you are good; *
 your mercy endures for ever.

Let all those whom you have redeemed proclaim *
 that you redeemed them from the hand of the foe.

You gathered them out of the lands; *
 from the east and from the west,
 from the north and from the south.

Some wandered in desert wastes; *
 they found no way to a city where they might dwell.

They were hungry and thirsty; *
 their spirits languished within them.

Then they cried to you in their trouble, *
 and you delivered them from their distress.

You put their feet on a straight path *
 to go to a city where they might dwell.

Let them give thanks to you for your mercy *
 and the wonders you do for your children.

For you satisfy the thirsty *
 and fill the hungry with good things.

Let them offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving *
 and tell of your acts with shouts of joy.

Some went down to the sea in ships *
 and plied their trade in deep waters;

They beheld your works, O God, *
 and your wonders in the deep.

Then you spoke, and a stormy wind arose, *
 which tossed high the waves of the sea.

Then they cried to you in their trouble, *
 and you delivered them from their distress.

You stilled the storm to a whisper *
 and quieted the waves of the sea.

Then were they glad because of the calm, *
 and you brought them to the harbor they were bound for.

Let them give thanks to you for your mercy *
 and the wonders you do for your children.

Let them exalt you in the congregation of the people *
 and praise you in the council of the elders.

You changed deserts into pools of water *
 and dry land into water-springs.

You settled the hungry there, *
 and they founded a city to dwell in.

They sowed fields, and planted vineyards, *
 and brought in a fruitful harvest.

SECOND READING

Abba Simon described his accidie to Abba John Cassian: “I am on fire with innumerable and various wanderings of soul and shiftiness of heart and cannot collect my scattered thoughts. I cannot even pour forth my prayer without interruption from useless images and memories of conversations and actions. I feel myself tied down by such dryness and barrenness that I cannot give birth to any spiritual ideas.”

One goal of the monastic art is to live an undivided life with both mind and body centered on God through spiritual disciplines. Jesus said, “If your eye is single, your whole body will be filled with light.” But Simon’s mind’s eye was scattered, his soul was wandering, and his heart was shifty. We do not know the content of his endless thoughts but he describes their crippling effect. “I cannot even pour forth my prayer without interruption.” The inner fire of God’s Spirit was replaced by a burning and barren desert that evaporated his ability to “give birth to any spiritual ideas.” No one is free from thoughts and influences that scatter our vision and experience of God. Like Simon, we must acknowledge them before we can escape their bondage. How will that happen?

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