

**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. Sit 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 you can download.

*Open Mind, Open Heart: 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* (2006) by Thomas Keating

*The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living: Excerpts from the Works of Thomas Keating*, ed. Iachetta (2009)

*Contemplative Prayer* (1969) by Thomas Merton

*Eternal Echoes* (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 65 FROM THE ST. HELENA PSALTER

You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; \*  
to you shall vows be performed in Jerusalem.

To you that hear prayer shall all flesh come, \*  
because of their transgressions.

Our sins are stronger than we are, \*  
but you will blot them out.

Happy are they whom you choose  
and draw to your courts to dwell there; \*  
they will be satisfied by the beauty of your house,  
by the holiness of your temple.

Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness,  
O God of our salvation, \*  
O Hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the seas that are far away.

You make fast the mountains by your power; \*  
they are girded about with might.

You still the roaring of the seas, \*  
the roaring of their waves,  
and the clamor of the peoples.

Those who dwell at the ends of the earth  
will tremble at your marvelous signs; \*  
you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.

You visit the earth and water it abundantly;  
you make it very plenteous; \*  
the river of God is full of water.

You prepare the grain, \*  
for so you provide for the earth.

You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; \*  
with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase.

You crown the year with your goodness, \*  
and your paths overflow with plenty.

May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, \*  
and the hills be clothed with joy.

May the meadows cover themselves with flocks,  
and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; \*  
let them shout for joy and sing.

**SECOND READING**

Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.’

*John 14:8-14*

We... find ourselves in this inner room and find out how much thinking goes on in our heads that we never knew was going by and so lots of us can't stand it and we get up and leave. If the “door is closed,” at least you may sit down again. Again, on a spiritual level, we might interpret the “closed door” as closing the door on our interior dialogue. That is to say, in many folks, there's more noise in our heads – in our reflections – than there is coming from outside., according to Jesus' advice. And so in Centering Prayer, we suggest closing the eyes simply as a symbol of letting go of our environment to join the people we're praying with at this deepest center where we are bonded together and may experience and gradually will experience our basic connectedness and oneness. And there we pray to God in secret. Notice the cascading movement of secrecy to ever-deeper levels of interior silence, with the reward of knowing God as God really is at the end. *From The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living, Excerpts from the Works of Thomas Keating (September 24)*