

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 They also have a free Centering Prayer mobile app you can download.

Open Mind, Open Heart: 20th 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 VERSES FROM PSALM 119 FROM THE ST. HELENA PSALTER

Happy are they whose way is blameless, *
 who walk in your law, O God!

Happy are they who observe your decrees *
 and seek you with all their hearts!

I will thank you with an unfeigned heart, *
 when I have learned your righteous judgments.

With my whole heart I seek you; *
 let me not stray from your commandments.

Blest are you, O God; *
 instruct me in your statutes.

I will meditate on your commandments *
 and give attention to your ways.

Open my eyes, that I may see *
 the wonders of your law.

Turn from me shame and rebuke, *
 for I have kept your decrees.

Even though rulers sit and plot against me, *
 I will meditate on your statutes.

For your decrees are my delight, *
 and they are my counselors.

My soul cleaves to the dust; *
 give me life according to your word.

I have confessed my ways, and you answered me; *
 instruct me in your statutes.

Make me understand the way of your commandments, *
 that I may meditate on your marvelous works.

My soul melts away for sorrow; *
 strengthen me according to your word.

Take from me the way of lying; *
 let me find grace through your law.

I have chosen the way of faithfulness; *
 I have set your judgments before me.

I hold fast to your decrees; *
 O God, let me not be put to shame.

I will run the way of your commandments, *
 for you have set my heart at liberty.

SECOND READING

“You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world... All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which God loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what God has made us... which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

Ephesians 2:1-10

A fruit of the night of spirit is freedom from the domination of any emotion... This takes place not by repressing or unduly suppressing unwanted emotions by sheer willpower, but by accepting and integrating them into the rational and intuitive parts of our nature. The emotions will then serve and support the decisions of reason and will, which is their natural purpose. The integration of our emotional life with reason and faith and the subjection of our whole being to God constitute St. Thomas Aquinas’ definition of human happiness. In his view, human beings were meant to act in harmony with their nature and to enjoy doing so. This harmonious state is substantially restored in the night of spirit by extinguishing the last traces of our subjection to the emotional programs for happiness in the spiritual part of our nature.

From The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living, Excerpts from the Works of Thomas Keating (May 24)