

**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 111** FROM THE ST. HELENA PSALTER

Alleluia! I will give thanks to you,  
O God, with my whole heart, \*  
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

Great are your deeds, O God; \*  
they are studied by all who delight in them.

Your work is full of majesty and splendor, \*  
and your righteousness endures for ever.

You make your marvelous works to be remembered; \*  
you are gracious and full of compassion.

You give food to those who fear you; \*  
you are ever mindful of your covenant.

You have shown your people the power of your works \*  
in giving them the lands of the nations.

The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice; \*  
all your commandments are sure.

They stand fast for ever and ever, \*  
because they are done in truth and equity.

You sent redemption to your people;  
you commanded your covenant for ever; \*  
holy and awesome is your Name.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; \*  
those who act accordingly have a good understanding;  
God's praise endures for ever.

**SECOND READING**

6 Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. 7But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'— 10these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. 12Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. 13And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. — *1 Corinthians 2: 6-13*

We surrender to the attraction of interior silence, tranquility, and peace. We do not try to feel anything, reflect about anything. Without effort, without trying, we sink into this Presence, letting everything else go. Let love alone speak: the simple desire to be one with the Presence, to forget self, and to rest in the Ultimate Mystery. This Presence is so immense, yet so humble; tender and personal. I know that I am known... We wait patiently; in silence, openness, and quiet attentiveness; motionless within and without. We surrender to the attraction to be still, to be loved, just to be.

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