

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 PSALM 146 FROM THE ST. HELENA PSALTER

Alleluia! Praise God, O my soul! *
 I will praise God as long as I live;
 I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
 Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of earth, *
 for there is no help in them.
 When they breathe their last, they return to earth, *
 and in that day their thoughts perish.
 Happy are they who have the God of Jacob
 for their help, *
 whose hope is in their God;
 Who made heaven and earth, the seas,
 and all that is in them; *
 whose promise abides for ever;

Who gives justice to those who are oppressed *
 and food to those who hunger.
 God sets the prisoners free
 and opens the eyes of the blind; *
 God lifts up those who are bowed down;
 The Most High loves the righteous;
 the Most High cares for the stranger; *
 God sustains the orphan and widow,
 but frustrates the way of the wicked.
 God shall reign for ever, *
 your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Alleluia!

SECOND READING

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love... ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love* because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters,* are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister* whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters* also. — *I John 4:7-21*

Beyond any experience, however spiritual and profound, remains the mystery of pure faith and pure love. This is our capacity to enter into divine union without self-reflection. God, the divine energy is so powerful and so intimate that no human faculty can perceive it in its purity. But faith receives the grace of divine union by consent. The growing conviction, born of spiritual experience and the purification of contemplative prayer, gradually awakens us to the reality of faith as the narrow way that leads to the pure love of God.

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