

Centering Prayer Guidelines

I. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within. (Open Mind, Open Heart by Thomas Keating)

1. The sacred word expresses our intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. The sacred word is chosen during a brief period of prayer to the Holy Spirit. Use a word of one or two syllables, such as: God, Jesus, Abba, Father, Mother, Mary, Amen. Other possibilities include: Love, Listen, Peace, Mercy, Let Go, Silence, Stillness, Faith, Trust.
3. Instead of a sacred word, a simple inward glance toward the Divine Presence, or noticing one's breath may be more suitable for some persons. The same guidelines apply to these symbols as to the sacred word.
4. The sacred word is sacred not because of its inherent meaning, but because of the meaning we give it as the expression of our intention to consent.

5. Having chosen a sacred word, we do not change it during the prayer period because that would be engaging thoughts.

II. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.

1. "Sitting comfortably" means relatively comfortably so as not to encourage sleep during the time of prayer.

2. Whatever sitting position we choose, we keep the back straight.

3. We close our eyes as a symbol of letting go of what is going on around and within us.

4. We introduce the sacred word inwardly as gently as laying a feather on a piece of absorbent cotton.

5. Should we fall asleep upon awakening we continue the prayer.

III. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-

gently to the sacred word.

1. "Thoughts" is an umbrella term for every perception, including body sensations, sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, plans, reflections, concepts, commentaries, and spiritual experiences.

2. Thoughts are an inevitable, integral and normal part of Centering Prayer.

3. By "returning ever-so-gently to the sacred word" a minimum of effort is indicated. This is the only activity we initiate during the time of Centering Prayer.

4. During the course of Centering Prayer, the sacred word may become vague or disappear.

IV. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

1. The additional 2 minutes enables us to bring the atmosphere of silence into everyday life.

2. If this prayer is done in a group, the leader may slowly

recite a prayer such as the Lord's Prayer, while the others listen.