



- A RESOURCE FOR ONGOING FORMATION -

Part 3: Prayer

Appendices (b) A Method of Centering Prayer

As taught by Thomas Keating—*Open Mind Open Heart*—centering prayer is a method designed to facilitate the development of contemplative prayer by preparing our faculties to cooperate with this gift. It is an attempt to present the teachings of any earlier time—*The Cloud of Unknowing*, for example—in an updated form and to put certain order into it. However, it is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer. It simply puts other kinds of prayer into new and fuller perspective. It embraces other prayer. Words—at Mass, for example—become full of meaning.



How do I go about it?

Minimum time for centering prayer
Is about 20 minutes

Centering prayer is not—

- Relaxation exercise
- Charismatic gift
- Para-psychological phenomena
- Mystical phenomena

Pray, without ceasing pray,
Your Captain gives the word;
His summons cheerfully obey,
And call upon the Lord:
To God your every want
In instant prayer display;
Pray always; pray, and never faint;
Pray, without ceasing pray!

From strength to strength go on,
Wrestle, and fight, and pray,
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day;
Still let the Spirit cry
In all his soldiers: Come!
Till Christ the Lord descend for high,
And take the conquerors home.

Charles Wesley, 1707-88

Preliminaries

The 'Vestibule' : preparation for the prayer period

1. Pick a time when you are most alert
2. Find a quiet place where you will not normally be interrupted
3. A short Scripture reading or relaxation exercise helps to dispose the mind to prayer

Guidelines

1. Choose a 'sacred word' as a symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within—such as 'love', 'peace', 'joy', 'Jesus'
2. Sitting comfortably, with eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the 'sacred word'
3. When you become aware of thoughts, return, ever so gently, to the 'sacred word'
4. At the end of the period of prayer remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. Conclude with the Our Father

Prayer in the Spirit at all times in every
prayer and supplication (Eph 6.18)

Scripture—



I Thess 5. 17-26

Pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Beloved, pray for us.

Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss.