

Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

A Discipleship Journey



Discipleship Habit #1: Pray Every Day

Week 13

Offering ourselves, just as we are

This weekly material is offered to support our Discipleship Journey as we walk in the foot prints of Jesus.

We encourage you to use this material as a part of your daily prayer practice as follows:

- ❖ Begin with the Opening Prayer.
- ❖ Reflect on the words of **Fr. Thomas Keating**.
- ❖ Pray with Centering Prayer.
- ❖ Close with the Closing Prayer.

Let us pray for each other that we are transformed, as individuals and as community, by this Discipleship Journey.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, we praise You for You are patient! You lovingly wait for us to come to You and long to listen to us. Forgive us for the times in our lives when we have not drawn close to You in prayer. In Your Scripture You tell us, "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6 - 7) We claim this promise. Thank You for being so available to us. Help us to know that You long to meet with us in prayer.

Lord, teach us how to pray. Give us the desire to get to know You in prayer every day and the discipline to guard our prayer time when busyness tempts us away from You. Jesus, we trust in You. We make this prayer in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

AMEN

Reflection: From Fr. Thomas Keating, *Open Heart, Open Mind*

All true prayer is based on the conviction of the presence of the Spirit in us and of His unfailing and continual inspiration. Every prayer in this sense is prayer in the Spirit. Still, it seems more accurate to reserve the term prayer in the Spirit, for that prayer in which the inspiration of the Spirit is given directly to our spirit without the intermediary of our own reflections or acts of the will. In other words, the Spirit prays in us and we consent.

According to the Baltimore catechism, "Prayer is the raising of the mind and heart to God." In using this ancient formula it is important to keep in mind that it is not we who do the lifting. In every kind of prayer the raising of the mind and heart to God can only be the work of the Spirit. In prayer inspired by the Spirit we let ourselves flow with the lifting movement and drop all reflections. Reflection is an important preliminary to prayer, but it is not prayer. Prayer is not only the offering of our interior acts to God: it is the offering of ourselves, of who we are just as we are.

Spend a few minutes now simply raising your mind and heart to God, offering God yourself, just as you are.

Praying with Centering Prayer

To be a disciple of Jesus means to live the way Jesus lived and surrender our lives to our Father. Jesus invites us to sharpen our spiritual attentiveness, to see with the eyes of Christ, so that we can love as Jesus loves. So often; however, our own thoughts and perceptions get in the way and trip us up. We need help re-aligning our minds to Christ's to help us live the Gospel message. We need a way to put our mind, our attention and intention, in our heart.

Centering Prayer is the tool we need to help us live out of our hearts – it gives us a way of letting go of our own stuff so that we are able to rest in the presence of God. Through Centering Prayer, we practice becoming aware of, then surrendering, thoughts to God so that this surrender becomes a habit and, eventually, a way of life. Unlike any other form of meditation, Centering Prayer doesn't focus on a particular word or thought. Rather, Centering Prayer is done with *intention*, not *attention*. By turning our intention to our awareness of God, our attention does not go to an object or focus on any one thing. This is an "objectless awareness" and surrender to the gaze of God.

Many who practice Centering Prayer struggle with their thoughts and complain that they cannot stop their "monkey-mind". They find themselves getting "hooked" into a stream of thought, becoming frustrated with their inability to clear their mind. This line of reasoning; however, implies that we are asked to renounce our thoughts, push them away as if that's even possible. Instead, Centering Prayer is a gentle surrender of thoughts, a letting go, a release and turning over of thoughts and returning our awareness to God.

Practitioners of this form of prayer often use what is called a "sacred word" which acts as a windshield wiper to our attention. When one realizes that a thought has brought his or her attention to something, the sacred word brings awareness to the need to release the thought and surrender attention to God. We do not do this on our own. In Centering Prayer we receive an enormous help from our subconscious. All we have to have is the willingness to be reminded that we are thinking; our hearts do the rest. In fact, the real gift of Centering Prayer is done in the noticing and surrender of the thought so that we can then return our awareness to God.

The Guidelines of Centering Prayer:

1. Sit relaxed and still yourself by stretching and deep breathing.
2. Acknowledge the presence of God within you.
3. Choose a single, sacred word as the symbol of your intention. It might be a name of God (e.g., Wisdom, Light), Jesus, or another sacred word: peace, love, goodness, hope.
4. Direct your attention to the presence of God; direct your internal gaze to His presence and open your heart to receive God's loving gaze. It might be helpful to pay attention to your breath. Don't focus your attention on your breath, but use the awareness of your breath to enter into God's presence.
5. If your mind wanders or you get distracted (which may include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections), use your sacred word to ever-so gently return your attention to God. Try to remain in silence for at least 10 minutes.
6. End with some expression of gratitude: a prayer of thanks, a smile, the Lord's Prayer.
7. Remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Closing Prayer

St. Teresa of Calcutta on Prayer

I don't think there is anyone who needs God's help and grace as much as I do. Sometimes I feel so helpless and so weak. I think this is why God uses me. Because I cannot depend on my own strength, I rely on Him twenty-four hours a day. All of us must cling to God through prayer. My secret is simple: I pray. Through prayer, I become one in love with Christ. I realize that praying to Him is loving Him.

We cannot find God in noise or agitation. Nature: trees, flowers, and grass grow in silence. The stars, the moon, and the sun move in silence. What is essential is not what we say, but what God tells others through us. In silence He listens to us; in silence He speaks to our souls. In silence we are granted the privilege of listening to His voice.

Silence of our eyes,
Silence of our ears.
Silence of our minds,
...In the silence of the heart God will speak.

View St. Teresa of Calcutta's message to those struggling with prayer:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WupB22jXUcY&t=4s>