

# CENTERING PRAYER

April Focus | 2023: A Year of Passionate Prayer  
Prepared by the Second-Ponce Discipleship Council

We declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."  
-1 Corinthians 2:7

## BACKGROUND

In the 1970s, a group of Trappist monks noticed that meditation was gaining acceptance. The monks--Thomas Keating, William Meninger and Basil Pennington--were the voices who shared the prayer with the broader Christian church. Thomas Keating describes centering prayer as "a way of saying 'Here I am.' The next step is up to God. It is a way of putting yourself at God's disposal; it is God who determines the consequences."

"Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing ... This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship" (Pennington). Prayer is our most basic spiritual discipline. God calls us away from earthly voices to sit in God's holy presence.

The early church and desert monastic communities used this style of prayer, and it continues in some faith communities. It is an opportunity to empty out the business of our life and look to God. Being in God's presence is the focus of centering prayer.

## CENTERING PRAYER STEPS

**1** Find a quiet space where you are comfortable and try to relax. Close your eyes.

**2** Choose a sacred word such as Jesus. Holy, Lord, peace, or hope. A short phrase is also an option. Concentrate on your breathing in and out.

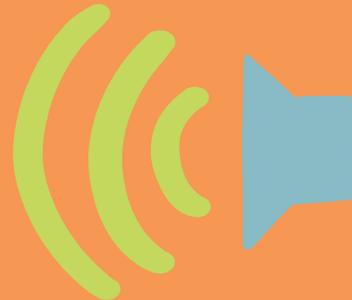


When other thoughts rise, set them aside. Be gentle with yourself.

Open your heart to the Holy Spirit.



**5** Repeat your sacred word for a few minutes. If you do not feel an awareness continue repeating your word or pray the Lord's prayer to get started. When you are ready, let go of the word. Listen for peace.



**6** Try the practice for two weeks before you assume nothing is happening. Do not be judgmental. Just keep going. As long as your intention is to be with God, you cannot go wrong.

## MORE INFO

There are also free apps to help guide you, including "Centering Prayer" and "Pray as You Go."

Want to learn more? Read M. Basil Pennington, Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form, Doubleday, 2010.