



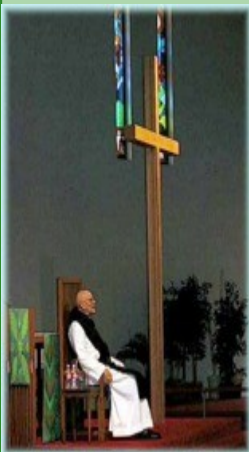
Australasian Centering Prayer Network Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

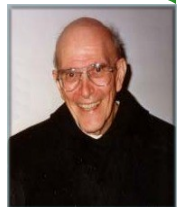
15 MARCH 2009

WHAT CENTERING PRAYER IS NOT:

- It is not a technique.
- It is not a form of self-hypnosis.
- It is not a relaxation exercise.
- It is not limited to the "felt" presence of God.
- It is not a charismatic gift.
- It is not discursive meditation or affective prayer.



Contemplative Thought For Living – An article for spiritual growth by Fr Thomas Keating ocd



Breathed by the Spirit

Jesus breathed on his disciples on the evening of his resurrection saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit". There is thus no doubt of Jesus' intent and ardent desire to communicate the Holy Spirit to us.

Earlier Jesus had taught, "How much more (than ordinary parents who give good gifts to their children) will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Lk.11:13).

Thus there is no doubt regarding the intent and ardent desire of the Father to impart the Spirit to us. The traditional liturgical hymn to the Holy Spirit prays, "Come Holy Spirit!"—*Veni Sancte Spiritus!* Hence there can be no doubt of the Spirit's intent and ardent desire to be poured into the Body of Christ and into each one of Christ's members. Let every breath then be a cry for the coming of the Holy

Spirit, the supreme Gift of the Father and the Son.

Let breathing be a way of participating in healing the sickness of the world paralysed by selfishness, exhaling the saving power of the Spirit into the abyss of darkness that surrounds the earth's atmosphere—the result of millennia of human brutality, violence, malice, indifference, and injustice.

Be effortlessly aware of the Ground of Being from which all things arise at each nanosecond of time and which might be described as ever-present Awareness keeping silent watch. It is nonjudgmental, simple, penetrating all reality; the backdrop, background, and source of everything, and the eternal Now beneath the apparent movement of time.

In Centering Prayer we do not try to reflect, analyze, or understand. We invite the Spirit to take over our mental faculties—memory, intellect, and will. We disregard all sense impressions and our emotional reactions. We re-

main inwardly and outwardly silent and still, with no attention to external stimuli or particular movements of the mind. We cultivate consciousness without any particular content. Our intention is to rest in God and to be united with everything that exists in the Source of all that is.

Ever-present Awareness does not do anything. It just is and sustains all that exists, letting all things follow their innate nature and fulfill their created purpose. We do not need to make acts of knowledge or will to be in God's presence. At a certain point in contemplative prayer, to do so introduces a sense of separation from God or a certain uneasiness. Once God's abiding presence is stabilized, we might even feel as if we were withdrawing from oneness with the divine by such acts. Ever-present Awareness is not looking at us, but at Itself in us.1

"Be effortlessly aware of the Ground of Being from which all things arise at each nanosecond of time and which might be described as ever-present Awareness. Keeping silent watch."

continued

We may notice in everyday life an increase of mental, physical, and spiritual energy, and a certain quiet joy without knowing where it comes from. We feel detached from every-thing even while functioning in our customary ways. The past becomes inconsequential along with its contents, and the future is of no importance if we think of it at all. A sense of peace, freedom, spaciousness, and general well-being predominates.

In this context, we see that to seek rewards from God is a misunderstanding because we already have what is better than any reward. We are right now all that we can ever want or desire to be.

We just think it isn't so. Stop thinking that thought and see what remains.

Relax into the all-embracing and boundless Presence of God which is beyond time, conceptual thinking, words, and actions but present in everything that exists and containing everything that exists.

Rest in the divine Trinity, in the bosom of the Father, in the heart of the Eternal Word, and in the infinite love of the Holy Spirit. This is the doctrine and experience of the Divine Indwelling, the most fundamental basis of our relationship with God.

1 Cf. Ken Wilber, *Eye of the Spirit*, Shambala, Boston, 1997,

Centering Prayer Guidelines

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. 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.
3. When engaged with your thoughts*, return ever-so gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

* Thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, concepts and reflections



Contemplative Prayer is normal

Contemplative Prayer is the normal development of the grace of baptism We may think of prayer as thoughts or feelings expressed in words. But this is only one expression. Contemplative Prayer is the opening of mind and heart - our whole being - to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words and emotions. We open our awareness to God whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing - closer than consciousness itself.

Contemplative Prayer is a process of interior purification leading, if we consent, to divine union.

"Together in Silence - Transforming the World"



Sheikh Kabir Helminski, Bhikkhu Ajahn Sona, Fr Thomas Keating, Rabbi Ted Falcon

Reflection:

God's first language is Silence. Everything else is a translation.

--Thomas Keating

For Information and Resources Contact:

Dr Stewart Sharlow

Email: ssharlow@bigpond.net.au

© 2003 Contemplative Outreach Ltd