

Inner Work Guidebook

ACTIVITY: CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER/CENTERING PRAYER

Description and Detail of Activity What is it?

There are two general categories when speaking of prayer. The two traditions are: Kataphatic and Apophatic. Kataphatic prayer is prayer that involves our various faculties such as the intellect, imagination and verbal expression. Apophatic prayer is the prayer “too deep for words.” It is the prayer of silence ... of pure faith and Presence.

There are many terms used to attempt to describe this prayer form. It has been said to be “resting” in God, or “rapt attention” to God. All attempts at verbalizing this experience fall short of the reality. Contemplation transcends the thinking and reasoning mind as well as the emotions and feelings of the affective faculties. It is the prayer and direct experience of faith.

Why do it?

- It allows us to STOP and be present to God
- It helps us to EXPERIENCE self and God in a different way
- It is very uncomfortable, and yet deeply COMFORTING at the same time.

How to do it?

This practice is fairly simply and usually involves a 20-30 minute session once or twice per day. The following guidelines might be helpful:

- Establish a regular sacred space where you can enjoy silence and solitude
- Sit comfortably and in a relaxed manner, but with attention
- Close your eyes and still your body
- Breathe slowly and gently, remaining aware of your breathing
- Choose a sacred word or image as a touchstone to return to when distractions creep in □
- Use a timer or one of the many CD's available to remove any anxiety about time elapsed □
- Conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving, Our Father, etc.

Suggested Resources for this Activity

Hall, R. C. *Too Deep for Words.*

Merton, Thomas. *Contemplative Prayer.*

Finley, James. *Christian Meditation.*

Keating, Thomas; *Centering Prayer.*

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