

Contemplative Prayer

SpiritLife
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Types of Prayer

- Kataphatic – intentionally engages us through words and images. Use of your mind and will, your human consciousness to pray.
- Apophatic prayer – without words, images or symbols. Receptive stance rather than interactive. Resting in God. Being with God.

Lectio Divina

- Reading the scripture prayerfully and slowly – *lectio*
- Meditating on the scripture – *meditatio*
- Praying/Speaking to God – *oratio*
- Contemplation/resting in God – *contemplatio*

Contemplative Prayer/Practices

Discussion of Question # 1

- **What is your understanding of praying contemplatively? What are some of the ways that you pray in a contemplative way?**

Contemplation – “Classic Definitions”

- deep attentiveness to whatever is present. Being attentive to the presence of God.
- “there is really only one kind of contemplation. The word used in its strict and correct sense signifies infused or mystical contemplation. This is also called ‘passive’ contemplation. It is a pure gift of God and, as God is the principal agent who infuses it into the soul and who by this means, takes possession of the soul’s faculties and moves them directly accord to His will.”

-- Thomas Merton in *What is Contemplation?*

- “there is another broad sense of the word contemplation. Here the soul, aided by ordinary grace, works in the familiar natural mode. One reasons and uses one’s imagination and elicits affections in the will. One makes use of all the resources of theology and philosophy and art and music in order to focus a simple affective gaze on God.” “All traditional means and practices of the interior life come under the heading of active contemplation to the extent that they help us to know and love God by a simple gaze on [God].”

Thomas Merton



- Infused contemplation, mystical contemplation, passive contemplation
- : “In the strict sense of the word, contemplation is a supernatural love and knowledge of God, simple and obscure, infused by [God] into the summit of the soul, giving it a direct and experimental contact with God.” -- Thomas Merton
- Learning not to do; Learning to be.

- “learning *to be yourself*, to enter into the gift of your own being. Learning to accept the gift of your own being, your own creation. To be in harmony with your own being and with your own continues creation is also to be in harmony with all of the creation around us, it is being in harmony with the Creator.” -- John Main



Creating an Inner Space is about...

- Letting go or detaching from things that keep us from attending to God
- Interior freedom
- A resting place for God
- God's home
- God's Temple

We create an inner space so that...

- We can make room for the fullness of God's presence.
- We can focus our hearts and minds on deeper values
- We can approach life and others with a free, loving, and uncluttered heart
- We can be less self-absorbed and more absorbed in God and others
- We can find God in all realities of life.

We create inner space by...

- Living in the present moment; using our senses
- Silence
- Stillness
- Awareness, attentiveness
- Pain
- Surrendering to God and detachment
- Fasting
- Breathing and breath awareness

Discussion of Question # 2

What helps me to be in a "being" stance rather than a "doing" mode? How often do I enter into these ways of just "being?"

Centering Prayer: a Contemplative Practice

- Choose a sacred word
- Sitting comfortable and with eyes closed, introduce the sacred word
- When engaged with thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
- Remain in silence



- www.contemplativeoutreach.org

Blocks/Hindrances to the Development of a Contemplative Outlook

- Lack of an interior life
- A non-reflective approach to life; externally oriented
- Childhood wounds, abuse, and neglect
- Distorted notion/image of God
- Fear of God
- Low self-esteem or shame
- Self-absorption
- Serious past regressions without healing or help, such as involvement with drugs/alcohol or having an abortion
- "Secrets" from family or in your family

Blocks/Hindrances to the Development of a Contemplative Outlook

- Addictions and compulsions
- Co-dependency issues and tendencies
- Doing vs Being: Inability to "be"
- Lack of primal human love
- Repressed feelings, or out of touch with feelings
- Inability to be vulnerable
- Obsessive need to be in control
- Repressed sexuality
- Unforgiveness of another or yourself

Discussion of Questions # 3 & 4

What do I understand by a contemplative outlook on life? Is my outlook on life contemplative at this point in my life? What helps me to develop a contemplative rather than compulsive stance toward life?

What are some hindrances or blocks to my being more contemplative? To praying more contemplatively?
