

# **82 Centering Prayer Sessions for Groups and Individuals**

**Compiled by  
Chaplain Shawn Kafader  
Friendship Village of Schaumburg  
Schaumburg, Illinois**

**An Introduction to Centering Prayer**  
**Rev. Dr. Shawn Kafader, D. Min.**

*My Personal Centering Prayer Journey*

I began my centering prayer journey on a cold winter Saturday in 1991 at a workshop retreat to the Chicago Cenacle Retreat Center. I had read of the practice of Centering Prayer, heard of the practice in seminary, and had even been invited to explore the practice by my spiritual director, but being the practical person that I am I needed to experience the practice in the right manner. I have since found that although there are guidelines for the practice of Centering Prayer, there is no right manner. I found that this unique manner of being with God connected with me, and although I have had periods of struggle over the years, Centering Prayer has been the anchor of my spiritual life.

For many years I sustained my practice of Centering Prayer by participating in a Saturday morning Centering Prayer group that met in a boardroom at Columbus Hospital in Chicago, IL. Here I found fellow pilgrims on a contemplative journey seeking a relationship with God who dwells within, discovered through the gift of silence and the letting go of thoughts. In my early years of Centering Prayer this type of support sustained me when I was tempted to abandon the discipline. The support of a Centering Prayer group also allowed me a safe place to ask questions and gain information about the practice of Centering Prayer. Along with group support, I attended Centering Prayer weekend retreats, weeklong retreats, and had the privilege of completing a 10-day intensive centering prayer experience with Contemplative Outreach ministries. Throughout the years that I have practiced Centering Prayer I have been continually nurtured by the writings of Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington, William Meninger, The unknown author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and the newsletter of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.

My daily practice of Centering Prayer includes an early morning 20 minute Centering Session and an afternoon 20 minute Centering Session. These are sacred appointments with God. I dearly miss them when they are missed. One of my spiritual mentors once advised me, “*Make an appointment with God, and show up!*” In a very real way this is what one must do to grow in this discipline – set a sacred appointment time with God and simply show up.

Over my years of practicing Centering Prayer I have felt an ever deepening of my spiritual journey. There have been those few moments when I have said, “Wow! That was a wonderful experience!” But these times have often been few and far between. Many days nothing has happened, I have simply been with God. Others have told me that I have changed. I have become calmer, more focused, gentler, moving through life with a sense of peace. When the fruits of the Spirit are

seen in our lives the discipline of our faith is slowly molding us into the image of Christ.

Over my years of practicing Centering Prayer, I have had only one sacred word. My word is “peace.” This is a word that sums the personal quest I hold in life, as well as my hope and prayer for others and the world. I chose this word at the very first Center Prayer retreat I attended, and although I have considered from time-to-time trying a new sacred word, I have been lead to stay with my familiar friend. It is a word that resonates and centers me even for the briefest of moments in the most difficult scenes of life.

I have always had a sacred space where I center in my home. In some settings this has been no more than a corner of a room, at times I have been blessed with my own prayer room. Throughout this journey I have had one chair that I have centered in. Simply settling in the chair offers me a centered feeling. Someday, I will part from this sacred space, but the discipline is so well entrenched in my life that I can center in any place and in any surroundings.

I share these thoughts with you as we begin this journey so that you may hear from a fellow pilgrim one experience of Centering Prayer. It is my hope that you may find this disciple a fulfilling one. As we begin, I share these words from *The Cloud of Unknowing*...

***My dear friend in the Spirit, up until now you have lived a good but ordinary Christian life, not very different from your friends. But apparently God is calling you to something more. Because of the love in his heart, which he has had for you from the moment of creation, he is not going to leave you alone, not about to let you off too easily. You are beginning to experience in a special way God's everlasting love, through which you were brought out of nothingness and redeemed at the price of his blood. You can no longer be content to live at a distance from God. In his great grace he has kindled a desire in your heart to be more closely united to him. He is leading you to himself on a loving leash of longing for a more perfect life. I pray for you, and beseech you to pay very close attention to the special call which you are hearing. Thank God from your heart, so that through grace you may stand firm in the special manner of life that you are deliberately undertaking, in spite of the subtle attacks of your worldly and spiritual enemies who would dissuade you from seeking the crown of life that will last forever.<sup>1</sup>***

May God bless us as we make this spiritual journey.

Verse for the Day sessions one through twenty is taken from *Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version*, 1989.

Verse for the Day sessions twenty two through eighty two is taken from *Psalms for Praying, an invitation to wholeness*, Nan C. Merrill, Continuum, New York, NY, 1998.

Reading to Prepare for Silence sessions one through twenty is taken from *Where Only Love Can Go*, John Kirvan, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN, 1996.

Reading for Reflection sessions one through twenty is taken from *Open Mind Open Heart*, Thomas Keating, Continuum, New York, NY, 2006.

Reading to Prepare for Silence sessions twenty one through fifty two is taken from *The Loving Search for God*, William A. Meninger, Continuum, New York, NY, 1994.

Reading for Reflection sessions twenty one through fifty two is taken from *Transformation in Prayer*, M. Basil Pennington, New City Press, Hyde Park, NY, 2009.

Reading to Prepare for Silence sessions fifty three through eighty two is taken from *Intimacy with God*, Thomas Keating, Crossroad, New York, NY, 1994.

Reading for Reflection sessions fifty three through eighty two is taken from *The Better Part*, Thomas Keating, Continuum, New York, NY, 2000.

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## ***Guidelines for Centering Prayer***

### ***1. Choose a Sacred Word.***

The sacred word in Centering Prayer is the expression of our intention to consent to God's presence and action within us. The sacred word should be chosen during a brief time of prayer. It should be a word that is comfortable to us. The sacred word is our way of letting go of all that distracts us in your time of Centering Prayer. The use of the sacred word allows us to move past our thoughts toward a deeper union with the God who dwells within us.

***Some Examples of Sacred Words*** – Lord, Jesus, Father, Mother, Abba, Amma, Jesu, Kyrie, Love, Peace, Mercy, Silence, Stillness, Faith, Calm, Hope, Trust, Yes, Shalom, Amen.

### ***2. Sit Comfortably with Eyes Closed, Settle Yourself, and Gently Introduce Your Sacred Word.***

Sit comfortably so that our body does not distract us during this time of prayer. Sit in such a way that we do not become so comfortable that we go to sleep. We close our eyes during Centering Prayer to let go of what is going on around us. Introducing the sacred word is the only activity we initiate during the time of Centering Prayer.

### ***3. When You Become Aware of Thoughts, Gently Return to Your Sacred Word.***

As we sit in silence we may find that thoughts and distractions will enter our mind. These may come in the form of perceptions, feelings, images, memories, reflections, things that must be done that day, or things that were not done yesterday. We may hear the sounds of many things in our environment. Some of these will be things that we have never noticed before. This is a normal part of the Centering Prayer experience. At first we may find ourselves using our sacred word often as we are engaged with our thoughts. As we gain more experience with this form of prayer we will find that there will be prayer times when we hardly use our sacred word.

### ***4. At the End of your Prayer Time, Remain Still for a Couple of Minutes.***

Centering Prayer is a process of becoming attentive to God and detached from the thoughts and distractions of daily living. As we go deeper into silence, our psyche will need a few minutes to readjust to the external senses around us. As we grow into the discipline of Centering Prayer we will also begin to notice that these moments of transition will enable us to bring the gift of Centering and silence into our daily life.



## **Session One**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
From God comes my salvation.  
(Psalm 62:1)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Let me no longer be content  
to live at a distance from you.  
In your great grace kindle a desire in my heart  
to be more closely united to you.  
Fasten me to you with a loving leash of longing  
for a more perfect life.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Contemplative prayer is the world in which God can do anything. To move into that realm is the greatest adventure. It is to be open to the Infinite and hence to infinite possibilities. Our private, self-made worlds come to an end; a new world appears within and around us and the impossible becomes an everyday experience. Yet the world that prayer reveals is barely noticeable in the ordinary course of events.

## **Session Two**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Be Still and Know that I am God.”

(Psalm 46:10)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

O God, you are a jealous lover  
who alone can build within me  
a desire to be alone with you.

You do not ask for my help,  
only for my heart, for all of it.

Let me gaze upon you, O God,  
in utter simplicity and trust in you  
to make my heart yours alone.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

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 of the Spirit. Still, it seems more accurate to reserve the term *prayer in the Spirit*, for that prayer 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. The traditional term for this kind of prayer is *contemplation*.



## **Session Three**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Wait for the Lord; be strong,  
and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord.”

(Psalm 27:14)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The goal of your life is now to lift up your heart to God  
in simple, undiluted acts of love, for him in himself,  
and not for anything he may give you. Think of him only.

Do not let your mind and heart be distracted.

Do everything you can to set aside everything that is not God,  
even his most beautiful creations,  
so that neither your thoughts or your desires  
will be directed to anything but God.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The root of prayer is interior silence. We may think of prayer as thoughts or feelings expressed in words, but this is only one of its forms. “Prayer,” according to Evagrius, “is the laying aside of thoughts.” This definition presupposes that there *are* thoughts. Centering prayer is not so much the absence of thoughts as detachment from them. It is an opening of mind and heart, body and emotions – our whole being – to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond words, thoughts, and emotions – beyond, in other words, the psychological content of the present moment. In centering prayer we do not deny or repress what is in our conscious. We simply accept the fact of whatever is there and go beyond it, not by effort, but by letting go of whatever is there.

## **Session Four**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“The Lord God is with you,  
He is mighty to save.

He will take great delight in you,  
He will quiet you with his love,  
He will rejoice over you with singing.”  
(Zephaniah 3:17)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Here alone with you, in the gathering darkness of this night, let me do everything I can to set aside all my daily concerns, so that neither my thoughts or my desires, will be directed to anything but you. Let this be. Let me pay no attention to my concerns, but bury them in a cloud of forgetting.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Our participation in the educational process is what Christian tradition calls self-denial. Jesus said, “Unless you deny your inmost self and take up the cross, you cannot be my disciple” (Mark 8:34). Denial of our *inmost* self includes detachment from the habitual functioning of our intellect and will, which are our inmost faculties. This may require letting go not only of ordinary thoughts during prayer, but also of our most devout reflections and aspirations insofar as we treat them as necessary means of going to God.

## **Session Five**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Those who wait for the Lord shall  
renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.”  
(Isaiah 40:31)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

With your extravagant love, Lord God,  
light up the darkness of our unknowing.  
Let all creation tremble.

Let the learned people discover how little we know.  
Let all the angels and saints understand how little we see of you.  
Let perfect humility be born in our lives.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Centering Prayer is part of the dynamic process that evolves through personal relationship rather than by strategy. At the same time a reasonable amount of organization in one's prayer and lifestyle advances the process, just as wholesome food and exercise help youngsters grow to physical maturity.

## **Session Six**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Trust in the Lord and do good;  
So you will live in the land, and enjoy security.

Take delight in the Lord,  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

(Psalm 37:3-4)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Here alone with you, in the gathering darkness of this night, remind my heart that all my best efforts at earning your love, all my prayers and strivings, all my sorrow and pain amount to little. Here in the dark, where only love matters, let them be forgotten.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Dedication to God is developed by commitment to one’s spiritual practices for the love of God. Service to others is the outgoing movement of the heart prompted by compassion. It neutralizes the deep-rooted tendency to become preoccupied with our own spiritual journey and how we are doing. The habit of service to others is developed by trying to please God in what we do and by exercising compassion beginning with those with whom we live. To accept everyone unconditionally is to fulfill the commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). It is a practical way of bearing one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2). Refusing to judge even in the face of persecution is to fulfill the commandment to love one another “as I have loved you” (John 13:34) and to lay down one’s life for one’s friends (John 15:13).

## **Session Seven**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!  
I will praise the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.”  
(Psalm 146:1-2)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Even though God forever escapes our understanding,  
he shapes himself to the dimension of our souls  
by adapting his Godhead to us. Our souls are fitted exactly to him,  
because he has created us in his image and likeness.  
And through his generous grace our souls become able  
to embrace the whole of him. For God has given us two great  
powers – the power to know and the power to love.  
God, who is our maker, forever escapes our power to know.  
But he is forever accessible to our power to love.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Habits of dedication to God and service to others form the two sides of a channel through which the energies of the unconscious can be released without submerging the psyche in the floodwaters of chaotic emotions. When these energies flow in orderly fashion between the banks of dedication and service, they will raise us to higher levels of spiritual perception, understanding, and selfless love.

## **Session Eight**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“My thoughts are completely different from yours,” says the Lord.

“And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.

For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways

and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”

(Isaiah 55:8-9)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The power of love in each of us individually is great enough

to reach God who is without limits,

who forever escapes the power of our mind.

To experience with the help of grace, the everlasting,  
miraculous wonder of God’s love is to know endless happiness.

To never know it would be endless pain. Exercise then your

power to love God, and you will discover a love so powerful

that it brings with it all that God is.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Jesus in his divinity is the source of contemplation. Anything that we perceive of God can be a radiance of His presence and not God as He is. When the divine light strikes the human mind, it breaks down into many aspects just as a ray of ordinary light, when it strikes a prism, breaks down into varied colors of the spectrum. There is nothing wrong with distinguishing different aspects of the Ultimate Mystery, but it would be a mistake to identify them with the inaccessible Light.

## **Session Nine**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
From him comes my salvation.”

(Psalm 62:1)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

God...even though, no matter what I do,  
I will never comprehend you fully,  
let me find my rest, in that cloud of unknowing in which  
you alone may be found. Ignite in my heart  
a simple, humble impulse of love  
that has you alone as its object.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The Spirit speaks to our conscience through scripture and the events of daily life. Reflection on these two sources of personal encounter and the dismantling of the emotional programs for happiness prepare the psyche to listen at more refined levels of sensitivity. The Spirit then begins to address our conscience from the deep source within us which is our true Self. This is contemplation properly so-called.

## **Session Ten**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

(1 John 4:10)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

This much I know: that much will be forgiven me  
if I love much. It will not be my tears,  
not any burst of sorrow or regret,  
not anything that I can see or understand  
that will bring your forgiveness except loving you,  
loving you greatly, loving you alone.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Spiritual disciplines, both East and West, are based on the hypothesis that there is something that we can do to enter upon the journey to divine union once we have been touched by the realization that such a state exists. Centering prayer is a discipline to reduce the obstacles to the full development of contemplative prayer. Its modest packaging appeals to the contemporary attraction for how-to methods. It is a way of bringing the procedures to be found in the contemplative teachings of the spiritual masters of the Christian tradition out of the dusty pages of the past into the broad daylight of the present.



## **Session Eleven**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“In everything do to others as you  
would have them do to you;  
For this is the law and the prophets.”  
(Matthew 7:12)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Charity is contained subtly and perfectly in that small blind impulse of love that allows us to pierce the cloud of unknowing to discover there our rest. But to practice charity means not just loving God for himself, above all creatures, but loving our neighbor with a love equal to the love we have for ourselves.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Centering prayer is not just a method. It is pure prayer at the same time, a prayer of consenting to God's presence and action within. Its primary scriptural basis is Jesus' wisdom saying in Matthew 6:6: “If you want to pray, enter your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret and your Father who sees in secret, will reward you.”

## **Session Twelve**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Seek the Lord while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near.”

(Isaiah 55:6)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

God often gives his grace in a special way to the least of us and to the amazement of the world. You can be sure that on the judgment day some who are now despised and considered of no spiritual worth will take their place with the angels and saints, and some who in this life are honored will be shunted aside. Judge no one in this life, Least of all yourself.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

In centering prayer we withdraw our attention from the ordinary flow of thoughts. We tend to identify ourselves with that flow. But there is a deeper part of ourselves, the spiritual level. Centering prayer opens our awareness to this deep level of our being that might be compared to a stream or river on which our memories, images, feelings, inner experiences, and the awareness of outward things are all resting. Many people are so identified with the ordinary flow of their thoughts and feelings that they are not aware of the source from which these mental objects are emerging. Like boats or debris floating along the surface of a river, our thoughts and feelings must be resting on something. This something is the inner stream of consciousness, which is our participation in God’s being.

## **Session Thirteen**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness;  
For we do not know how to pray as we ought,  
but that very Spirit intercedes  
with sighs too deep for words.”

(Romans 8:26)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Here alone with you, O Lord,  
quiet the clamor of a thousand words and images  
that flood my mind and heart, that somewhere in their midst  
I will find the right word, the right thought,  
the right reason, to live for your alone.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Centering prayer is consenting and surrendering to God. The spiritual journey does not require going anywhere because God is already present and within us. It is a question of allowing our ordinary thoughts to recede into the background and to float along the river of consciousness without our noticing them, while we direct our attention toward the river on which they are floating. We are like someone sitting on the bank of a river and watching the boats go by. If we focus intentionally on the river rather than on the boats, the capacity to disregard thoughts as they go by will develop, and a general kind of attention will emerge that might be called spiritual attentiveness.

## **Session Fourteen**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Be silent before the Lord God!  
For the day of the Lord is at hand;  
The Lord has prepared a sacrifice,  
He has consecrated his guests.”  
(Zephaniah 1:7)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Let my prayers rise directly to you, O Lord.  
Let nothing come between us. Let me not hesitate to meditate,  
or compose a careful response to your presence,  
but allow what comes naturally,  
crying out the only word I need: “God.”

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

A thought in the context of this method is any perception that appears on the inner screen of consciousness. This could be a concept, a reflection, body sensation, emotion, image, memory, plan, noise from outside, a feeling of peace, or even a spiritual communication. In other words, anything whatsoever that registers on the inner screen of consciousness is a “thought” in the context of centering prayer. The method consists of letting go of every kind of thought during the time of prayer, even the most devout thoughts.

## **Session Fifteen**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for,  
the conviction of things not seen.”

(Hebrews 11:1)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

God hears our simple prayer because it captures within itself the full energy of our being and all the powers of our soul. In its simplicity it is forever perfect because it includes within it a love for all others even as we love ourselves and the God who hears our cry.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The sacred word is not a means of going where you want to go. It simply affirms and directs your attention to consent to God’s presence and thus fosters a favorable atmosphere for the development of the more general awareness to which your spiritual nature is attracted. Your purpose is not to suppress all thoughts because that is impossible. You will normally have a thought after a minute or less of inner silence, unless the action of grace is so powerful that you are absorbed in God. Centering prayer is not a way of turning on the presence of God. Rather, it is a way of saying, “Here I am.” The next step is up to God. It is a way of putting yourself completely at God’s disposal; it is to submit to *God’s intentionality*, which is to give Himself completely to you.

## **Session Sixteen**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”  
(John 16:13)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

I trust that a simple prayer of a single syllable even when it emerges from a sinful soul such as mine, even from someone like me who has so often had no time or even one word for you, pierces the heavens, the dark cloud of unknowing, and is heard.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The sacred word is a way of letting go of casual thoughts and of disengaging from the more interesting ones that come down the stream of consciousness. It does this not by attacking thoughts directly but by reaffirming your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within. This renewal of the will’s consent, as it becomes habitual, creates an atmosphere in which you can simply pay little or no attention to the normal and inevitable flow of thoughts.

## **Session Seventeen**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard,  
no human heart has conceived,  
what God has prepared for those  
who love him”

(1 Corinthians 2:9)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

I offer you my simple prayer. Let it carry to you  
the full energy of my being and all the powers of my soul.  
It is all I have. Lord, hear my cry.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

If you are nervous about doing what may seem like “nothing” for a period of time, recall that nobody hesitates to go to sleep for six or seven hours every night. Practicing this prayer, however, is not doing nothing. It is a very gentle kind of activity. As long as the will keeps consenting to God by returning to the sacred word when engaged with thoughts, this is enough activity to stay awake and alert.

## **Session Eighteen**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“O God, you are my God,  
I seek you, my soul thirsts for you;  
My flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water.”

(Psalm 63:1)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Prayer is nothing more than a devout turning to God in order to attain good and do away with evil. For this reason, when we need words with which to pray, the two simple words “God” and “sin” are more than enough. They contain within themselves everything our prayer could and should be.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Twenty to thirty minutes is the minimum amount of time necessary for most people to establish interior silence and to get beyond their superficial thoughts. You may be inclined to remain longer. Experience will teach you what the right amount of time is. At the end of your chosen time span, begin to think your ordinary thoughts again. This may be a good time to converse with God. You may also wish to say some vocal prayer quietly to yourself or to begin planning your day. Give yourself about two minutes before opening your eyes. Withdrawal from the ordinary use of the exterior and interior senses brings you to a deep spiritual attentiveness; opening your eyes right away could be jarring.



## **Session Nineteen**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“The Lord is in his holy temple;  
Let all the earth keep silence before him.”  
(Habakkuk 2:20)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Let me capture in a single word,  
the longing of my soul for you alone.  
And never let me cease to speak your name  
Until the longing of my heart is fulfilled.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The fundamental disposition in centering prayer is consenting to God. Christian practice can be summed up by the word *patience*. In the New Testament patience means waiting for God for any length of time, not going away, and not giving in to boredom or discouragement. It is the disposition of the servant in the Gospel who waited even though the master of the house delayed his return till well after midnight. When the master finally came home, he put the servant in charge of his whole household. If you wait, God will manifest Himself. Of course, you may have a long wait.

## **Session Twenty**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“All of us, with unveiled faces, seek the glory of the Lord.

We are being transformed into the same image

from one degree of glory to another;

for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”

(2 Corinthians 3:18)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

With great saints let me understand

that if I have you, God, I have all that is good,

all that I could ever desire. So, let me focus my prayer,

my mind, and my heart on you alone.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 Minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Have no expectation in this prayer. It's an exercise of effortlessness, of letting go. To *try* is a thought. That's why we say: Return to the sacred word ever so gently. To struggle is to want to achieve something. That is to aim at the future, whereas this method of prayer is designed to bring you into the present moment. Expectations also refer to the future; hence they, too, are thoughts.

Detaching the mind of its customary routines of thinking is a process that we can only initiate, like taking the stopper out of a bath tub. The water goes down by itself. You don't have to push the water out of the tub. You simply allow it to run out.

## **Session Twenty One**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Love calls to us, "you are mine;  
this day I will become your Beloved;  
ask of me what you will."

(From Psalm 1)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Dear friend, do not try to compare yourself with others, either saints or sinners. Do not say, "At least I am better than such and such a one," or "I could never be as holy as that one." Just be yourself. Stand before God in your need and with the love that God gives to you and be content.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

In centering prayer we get in touch with God at the very center of our being, the ground of our being, as the source. We come to know our true self as that beautiful person who at each moment comes forth from God's creative love.

## **Session Twenty Two**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I cry aloud to You,  
and You answer me

within my heart.

(From Psalm 2)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Be content to be who you are, a special friend of God called to holiness. You are not someone else, either saint or sinner, so forget making comparisons.

Concentrate then on this wonderful love God has for you. It is freely given, not because you deserve it but because God wants to give it to you.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

We need to be free from ourselves, from our false selves, projections and images, so that we can be open to reality in ourselves and others. Right living will necessarily follow from true love and deep prayer.

## **Session Twenty Three**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Set me free, my Beloved!  
for with You in my heart my fears  
will be transformed into Love.

(From Psalm 3)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Do you not know that what you do (your activity) springs from what you are (your being)? As the philosophers put it, action springs from being. St. Augustine said, “Do whatever you want, as long as you love.” – So let love be your first concern, indeed your only concern, and everything else will fall into place.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

During centering prayer, on some days there will be consolations that will make us feel very much at home during the prayer. But most days, that will probably not be the case. There will be little to satisfy the feelings and emotions.

## **Session Twenty Four**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Answer me when I call,  
O Beloved of my heart!  
Be gracious to me now;  
hear my prayer.  
(From Psalm 4)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

This is how you should pray. Simply love God. Be in God's presence in that love. – Please try to understand, dear friend of God, that when you love God you enter into the very heart of God. With this as your source, you then reach out and love all that God loves.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

When through the transformation of consciousness that centering prayer brings about, through the activity of the Holy Spirit in his gifts, God has indeed become the context of our thinking, then all our thoughts and images will be alive and life-giving.

## **Session Twenty Five**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Give heed to my words, O my Beloved;  
give heed to my groaning.

Listen to the sound of my cry, my Love,  
Heart of my heart, for to You I pray.

(From Psalm 5)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Gradually you will find your day becoming more and more filled with God's love, spilling over into all you do. When this happens, you are in what I would call the contemplative attitude. But you must remember that the contemplative attitude springs from the contemplative act – that is, lifting your will to God in response to God's grace in love. This takes but a moment.

Do it now!

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

True centering prayer cannot but bring us into the kingdom of heaven. We may not experience it in any sensible way. But in faith we know it is so.

And we will see it in our lives, as we become more and more determined to do the will of the Father in heaven.

## **Session Twenty Six**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I open the door of my heart to You,  
my Beloved, enter in and fill me  
with Your steadfast love.

(From Psalm 6)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

When you have union with God, you have union with everything God has made and loves. That is why the prayer that seeks this union, contemplative prayer, cannot be concerned with anything less than God. – This prayer seeks nothing – nothing – nothing but God. To be satisfied with anything else is to be satisfied with less than God.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

It is through centering prayer that we open the space for the Holy Spirit to begin to act in us through his gifts. We gain a new perception, one that enables us to see what is beneath the surface. We begin to perceive in each person that which is of God in them, his beautiful image.



## **Session Twenty Seven**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

O my Beloved, to You do I draw close;  
when all my inner fears well up,  
enfold me in Your strong arms.  
(From Psalm 7)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

I speak here, dear friend, of a great mystery. It may be beyond your understanding but not beyond your embrace. You have God's grace, God's power, God's invitation to the loving search. Indeed we are told that we could not search for God unless we had already found God. We are brought to God by realizing what God has done for us. We remain with God in contemplative love because of what God is in Godself.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

It is a journey. At any point we can sit by the side of the road and take our rest. We can say: it is enough for me, or: it is enough for now. The only one who limits the joy, the peace and the light we enjoy is ourselves. Not God. God is all gift.

## **Session Twenty Eight**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

If I close my heart to Love,  
the Beloved awaits close by;  
Love cultivates the soil of my heart,  
planting seeds in its garden.

(From Psalm 7)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Many people find it helpful to choose a prayer word to aid them in this loving search (for God). –  
Let this be a symbol and expression of your love for God.  
Sit quietly and listen to this prayer word repeat itself in your heart. As you do this, your will is reaching out to embrace God in love.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

One of the surprises of centering prayer is that we discover that God can manage the world for twenty minutes without us –  
and not mess it up too much!

## **Session Twenty Nine**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Give thanks to the Beloved  
with your whole heart;  
Sing praises to the Name  
above all names.  
(From Psalm 9)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Whenever your intellect or memory or imagination enters and tries to distract you, just gently focus on this prayer word and use it to chase away the distractions it tries to present. Contemplative loving of God is that simple.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Certainly a wonderful model for centering prayer is the little child in his father's arms. A true father is always delighted to have his little one in his arms. He doesn't much care if the child is squirming about a bit, looking this way and that or pulling his beard or just resting there or sleeping peacefully. As long as the child is there in his arms, the father is content.

## **Session Thirty**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Sing praises to the One, who is Love,  
who dwells in your heart!

(From Psalm 9)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Dear friend, there comes a time when you will be called from knowing *about* God to actually knowing God – that is, embracing God in love. You will be told, “Taste and see that the Lord is sweet,” or “Peace, be still, and know that I am God.”

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

In centering prayer we go right to the center, where Jesus ever dwells as our most intimate lover. He is there for us. And the little method of centering prayer helps us bypass all the crowding thoughts and images and come to rest right there in the center with Jesus, to be healed by him and made whole.

## **Session Thirty One**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Awaken, O Love! O You who created me,  
return to my side;

forget me not in my weakness.

(From Psalm 10)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Sometimes your memory has lists of things you should be doing or have forgotten to do. Sometimes your imagination will draw you pictures of wonderful projects you could accomplish or even sinfully attractive things that might beguile you. – Just ignore them and go on with your prayer word. Do this as often as necessary. Each time you go back to your loving prayer word, you are reaffirming your love for God.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Centering prayer creates in us a good, rich soil. In the moments of centering we are wide open to receive all that the Word has to give us. We let go of everything else; we are a boundless listening for the Word. And this attitude which we draw into our lives by regular practice of centering prayer does indeed spread out through the rest of our lives.

## **Session Thirty Two**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

The Beloved dwells in the Holy Temple,  
the sacred place within our hearts,  
loving and testing each one of us.  
(From Psalm 11)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

If we want to be truly loving persons, we must permit the love to come forth from the very heart of our being. Only then will we find that our actions, which proceed from our loving being, will consistently be loving actions. – Loving union with God destroys sin and the causes of sin at their very roots.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

When we sit down regularly to our centering – and during that centering, every time we become aware of anything else, we faithfully return to the Lord, gently using our love word – we begin to be steadfast in our intent. And what begins by fidelity to the prayer and in the prayer spreads out to the rest of our lives. Our whole heart's desire is for the Lord. We are good soil that is constantly asking for the enrichment of his grace.

## **Session Thirty Three**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I shall sing to the Beloved, who has answered  
my prayers a thousand fold!  
Come, O Beloved, make your home in my heart.  
(From Psalm 13)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

When we are engaged in the loving search for God, we are also engaged in the loving search for our true selves.

By embracing God in a union of love in the prayer of contemplation, we are gradually led by God to know our true selves. We come to know what we are like with all of our weaknesses and what we would be like without God's grace. We come also to know who we are as God's beloved sons and daughters.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

In centering prayer we listen and listen and we do understand, through the action of the Holy Spirit in the gifts. We look and look, and in a new way we perceive ourselves – as we are seen in the eyes of God. – Indeed, the whole creation is perceived in a new way, as shot through with divinity. Then, indeed, blessed are our eyes. For we have what every person longs to see. Our hearts do understand, we change our ways, and we are fully healed.

## **Session Thirty Four**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Remain ever before me, O Living Presence,  
for in You am I safe.

You are my Beloved;  
in You I can do all things.

(From Psalm 16)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

My friend, in our loving search, we are neither Martha nor Mary. We are both. There are times when we are called to be loving God in the union of contemplative prayer, and there are times when we have to be busy about many things serving others. Yet, we must admit that Jesus, while certainly recognizing the need for both of these aspects, gives preference to the loving, to Mary. This, he tells Martha, is the better part.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The spirit of watching can be carried on beyond the actual time of prayer. As we shower, shave, and dress we can continue to meditate on some Scripture text, repeat some simple prayer, or simply abide in the Presence, longing for an ever greater presence. A household agreement that allows this to be a time of quiet without chatter or the blare of radio, or television would greatly facilitate this.



## **Session Thirty Five**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I call upon You knowing You will answer me,  
Heart of my heart; incline Your ear to me,  
hear my words.

(From Psalm 17)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Do not be surprised if you should find yourself the victim of criticism, even from some good people, when you seek to give yourself to the quiet and the dark cloud of contemplative prayer. Many people will not understand your loving search. They will even criticize your meditation practice of gently going into God's presence in love by quiet listening to your prayer word as a symbol of your union with God. To such people you are not really praying if you are not caught up in a flurry of mental activity.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Being united to God, entering more fully into the experience of that union through prayer, is supposed to do something to us. We are not always comfortable with that transforming power. We tend to cling to what we have experienced ourselves having and being. But if we want to get to our deepest self, we have to go to the place where it originates. If we want to experience our deeper self we have to experience the place of our origin and that is something ever new.

For God ever calls us forth from nothingness.

## **Session Thirty Six**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I abandon myself to You, O Living Presence,  
my strength. You are my rock,  
my stronghold, my freedom, Almighty One.  
(From Psalm 18)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

(When people criticize you) pay them no mind, I tell you. Simply do what Mary did. Continue to sit quietly at the feet of Jesus in love. Give yourself regularly to your contemplative meditation for perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes each time – more if you wish. You do not have to defend yourself. You can do what Mary did – just remain silent and let Jesus defend you.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

As we sit in centering prayer, things do become clearer. It is not so much that we have brilliant insights; indeed, during the time of prayer we let all these things go. But there grows in us a deep sense that life does make sense. There is a certain unfolding. What has been hidden from us, the missing pieces of the puzzle of life, seem to show up. – God is at the center of our being. We let him truly be the Lord and Master of our domain. The kingdom of God is established within.

## **Session Thirty Seven**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I call upon You, Heart of my heart,  
singing praises to Your Name,  
and fear no longer holds me.  
(From Psalm 18)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Friend, it is really so very simple. God loves you; just love God in return. Do this and everything else will be added unto you. Give the priority of your life to whom it belongs, to God.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

If we are going to be what the Church wants us to be as contemplatives, we have to be willing to enter into contemplation – to die to ourselves, our own ideas, our own projects, our own doings, and open to God. – For it is not enough for us to be observant; it is not enough to say prayers and attend worship. We have to seek the contemplative experience. We need to be constantly reminded of this and encouraged and strengthen to do it.

## **Session Thirty Eight**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

You are the light of my life;  
You shine through my darkness.  
With You I can do all things;  
And my spirit soars like an eagle.  
(From Psalm 18)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

When we practice the simple meditation of contemplative prayer, we love God for Godself alone. We have no other motive. We seek no personal favors, no consolations. We do not pray for anything, not for the church, not for friends, not for sinners. Simply nothing, nothing, nothing – but loving God.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

One of the things Jesus says to us in centering prayer is "Bring them here." Bring me your senses, your mind, your heart. In centering prayer we bring everything to the Lord, all that we are, all that we have. We give them all to him, to let him do with them what he will. It is he who will heal them and make them whole, make them worthy instruments of the Holy Spirit, who will begin to act in them and through them by means of his gifts.

## **Session Thirty Nine**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Let the words of my mouth  
and the meditation of my heart find favor  
in Your Heart, O my Beloved,  
my strength and my joy!  
(From Psalm 19)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

You see, if you desire to love God, to meet and embrace God in the loving union of contemplative prayer, it means that God desires this union also. The invitation came from God; it was not your idea at all.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Centering prayer is prayer of the heart. It completely leaves off the lip service. True centering prayer always disposes us to give everyone their due, even while we cherish the time to give God his due. We know the time of centering is needed and nourishing, the source of all else. Yet we know that the call to constant prayer is lived out in many ways, that our prayer can, and does, take many forms.

## **Session Forty**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Your love is as a crown of fine  
gold upon my head.

(From Psalm 21)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Before we call upon God in prayer, God is already present to us, empowering us by the grace of the Holy Spirit to seek God. This is what I mean when I say that the loving search is, first of all, God's search for us. When we respond to it, then it becomes our search for God. This is also what I mean when I say, "You could not search for God unless you had already found God."

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

No one can practice centering prayer with any degree of fidelity and remain with their hearts far from God. As we faithfully let go of everything that comes along, everything from within and from without, to simply be with the Lord, all dross and attachments wash away. I know of no other form of prayer that is so effective for helping us arrive at purity of heart.

## **Session Forty One**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

O my Beloved, I cry out by day,  
but You do not answer;  
and by night, but I find no rest.  
(From Psalm 22)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Remember all of God's children are called to the loving search. I ardently desire to accompany anyone of them, of whatever religion or even with no religion at all, in his or her loving search. The church has told us that even the atheists who sincerely search for the truth are searching for God.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Through centering prayer not only do we come to know Jesus in the fullness of his divinity, but we also come to know Jesus in the fullness of his humanity, in his oneness with every other human person. Through the activity of the Holy Spirit in his gifts, we begin to see Jesus in everyone and everyone in Jesus. It would be hard to overstate the love and joy that this brings into our lives. And how it affects all our human relations, all our ministerial outreach, all our presence to others.

## **Session Forty Two**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

To You, O Love, I lift up my soul;  
O Heart within my heart,  
in You I place my trust.  
(From Psalm 25)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

What a glorious thing it is, dear friend, to enter into the heart of God! From this source and center of love, we return to work out whatever is required for our salvation and whatever is asked of us toward the salvation of the world. When we operate from the heart of God, we proceed from and together with the Son of God, and God's work of salvation is carried out in the love of the Holy Spirit.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Can I be a gift to others in need? Is that why he lets me linger on with this increasing dependency? Do they have a need for me to be here to give them a chance to learn more about self-giving love? As long as I am able, cannot my smiles, my affirmation, my expressed gratitude help them to get a little more in touch with their innate goodness?



## **Session Forty Three**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

O Loving Presence,  
I cherish Your dwelling place, my heart;  
O, that I might radiate Love Divine.  
(From Psalm 26)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

In the contemplative prayer of our loving search, dear friend, we are, as I have said, often troubled by our memory and imagination. Often these troubling thoughts have to do with unpleasant past events in our lives – things we have done or things done to us. – As a general rule, the time we allow for contemplative prayer is not the time for these thoughts. There are always exceptions to this but exceptions should not become the rule.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

We need to stop, to let go of all the surface stuff, and go into the desert of our heart. And listen. Then knowing our emptiness and deepest longings, we must seek the prophetic wisdom that can point the way. If we do not take the time to listen to our deepest longings, if we constantly drown them out with our activities and distractions, we can never hope to find true happiness.

## **Session Forty Four**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Hear, O my Beloved,  
when I cry aloud,  
be gracious and answer me!  
(From Psalm 27)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Dear friend, here is something to try. Look to God. After all, this is what we are concerned with in the loving search, is it not?

Do not attack the distracting thoughts directly. When you do this, you honor them. You give them attention. You leave your prayerful union with God and invite your intellect, memory, and imagination into the chamber of your heart. – God is forgotten while you wrestle with these uninvited visitors.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The important thing is that we do pray regularly and allow God to be the source of love, life, peace, and happiness that he wants to be and that we so much want. We need those times of prayer when we listen not just with our ears, our eyes, our minds, but more our hearts, with our whole being. It is outside the time of prayer that we will begin to see the difference, as the fruits of the Spirit begin to flourish in our lives.

## **Session Forty Five**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Heart of my heart, I call to You;  
You hear my cry and support me.

(From Psalm 28)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Sometimes, dear friend, nothing seems to work. You try to embrace God in loving prayer and your mind is just continuously filled with the chatter, clatter, comings and goings of distractions. At these times, you (your will) must just say, "I give up. There is nothing further I can do: I simply leave myself in God's hands." -This is true humility. This is how we stand before God, needing God's help. God will respond. God will come and embrace you. Just try it.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

In a word, the fruits of the Holy Spirit will be very present in our lives when we live out of our contemplative experience.

This is surely the way we can judge the authenticity of our experience. Our contemplation should overflow into the whole of our lives, creatively bringing a certain sacredness to our environment because our eyes have been opened to the sacred that is already there.

## **Session Forty Six**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I will praise You, O my Beloved,  
for You have raised me up,  
and have not let my fears overwhelm me.  
(From Psalm 30)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

I plead with you, for the love of God, do not give up on your prayer. Start over again every day. Do not look for consolations. Remember again and again that love begins when nothing is expected in return. You will have consolations enough when God wills it. Enjoy them when they are given, but do not look for them or become attached to them. Seek the giver, not the gifts.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

It is important not to judge the quality of our prayer by the presence or absence of thoughts or the use of our sacred word, or indeed by anything else. There is not place for judgment here. We are simply spending time with our Beloved. What happens, happens. The important thing is that we are making time for him, giving ourselves to him. We are not there to get anything for ourselves, especially not some sort of self-satisfaction or feelings or peace. This is a very pure Christian prayer. It is a real dying of self to give ourselves to God.

## **Session Forty Seven**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

In You, Beloved, I would make my home;  
Hear me and hasten to my assistance.

(From Psalm 31)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Do you want to love God? This is a simple question to answer. Sometimes people are concerned as to whether they really love God and consequently as to whether they are called to the prayer of this loving search. You may not be able to say with certainty that you do love God but you can say with certainty that you *want* to love God. Then that will suffice.

This desire comes from God and is a certain sign that God loves you and calls you to love.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

It is only when we are willing to let go of our rational control of consciousness and open the space for the Spirit to act in us through the gifts that we can begin to know and sense things as God knows and experiences them. This freedom to let go of our rational control and open to the divine activity is developed through the practice of contemplative prayer.

## **Session Forty Eight**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

O my Beloved, You are  
my Guide and my Teacher;  
Be watchful of me, give me Your counsel.  
(From Psalm 32)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

I do not know how to say this, dear friend in God, because we do not have language adequate to express it. When you sum up, as it were, the totality of your love for God in a simple prayer word, that word is empowered by the Holy Spirit. It directly pierces the heavens; it goes right to the heart of God. That word, through the love it symbolizes, is given to you by God and it must return to him. – Can you see why, dear friend, this prayer of loving union is so effective?

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

It would be a great mistake to try to do this prayer “right.” It is, rather, making space in our lives, both in regard to time and to mental attitude and desire, to allow God to reveal to us our true selves in the eyes of his love and to bring us to the freedom of the sons and daughters of God. Some things can only be known by experiential prayer. “Be still and know that I am God.” (Ps 46:10)

## **Session Forty Nine**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

When I searched for Love,  
the Beloved answered within my heart,  
and all my fears flew away.

(From Psalm 34)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Love of God will prompt you to a responsible regimen of spiritual reading, liturgical prayer, and devotional commitments. Love of neighbor will call you to a generous giving of yourself and your material goods in service. Love of self will inspire you to care for your own physical and mental well-being in a way that will be neither excessive nor neglectful. You will always find God when and where you need God, because you will always be united to God in love.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

All prayer is answered. But it is not always answered in the way we expect. God looks to the heart more than to the lips. The Lord knows we seek happiness for ourselves and for our loved ones. But he knows, he who sees in terms of eternal life, that what we specifically ask for is not always the way to happiness.

## **Session Fifty**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Commit your life to the Beloved,  
confident that Love will act  
on your behalf.  
(From Psalm 37)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The greatest obstacle between you and God in your loving prayer is yourself. – You, my friend, are the major obstacle, and the worst noises are the noises from within. If you want to be a true lover of God, you must love God even more than you love yourself. As John the Baptist said of Jesus, “He must increase, I must decrease.” This is not easy to say and to really mean.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The only way to true holiness, Christian holiness, is to die to the false self – the self that is made up of what we do and what we have and what we think others think of us – so that the true self, that beautiful image of God that ever comes forth from his creative love, and not our efforts, can emerge.



## **Session Fifty One**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Those who know Love are blessed and  
shall be filled with the Spirit;  
though their lives may seem difficult,  
Love raises them up.  
(From Psalm 37)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

We do not make a long journey in a single step. The loving search is made step by step on a daily basis. We need not be over concerned with what we meet on the way. God is with us; God began the journey for us and waits for us at the end.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Our most private room is that deep place within us, what we have been calling our "center." There, indeed, God dwells. And we are invited to go to that center, shut out all else and abide there with God in prayer. This is precisely what we do in centering prayer. With the use of our prayer word we, as it were, close the door, or to use another image, we create a cloud of unknowing, leaving everything outside and ourselves quietly and peacefully within with God.

## **Session Fifty Two**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Let me not separate myself from You,  
O Beloved!  
Make Your home in my heart!  
(From Psalm 38)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Centering Prayer brings us into the presence of God and thus fosters the contemplative attitudes of listening and receptivity. It is not contemplation in the strict sense, but rather it is *preparation* for contemplation by reducing the obstacles caused by the hyperactivity of our minds and of our lives.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Our first conversion focuses on trying to straighten out and clean up our ordinary conscious life. This is often called the Purgative Way. The Purgative Way consists in becoming aware of how our unconscious needs affect ordinary daily life including our service of God. It is unsettling for us to realize that, mixed in with our good intentions, are these infantile attitudes. They are necessary in early childhood in order to survive, but totally inappropriate now that we have grown up.

## **Session Fifty Three**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

And now, O Loving Presence,  
for what do I wait?  
My hope is in You.  
(From Psalm 39)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The Christian spiritual path is based on a deepening trust in God. It is trust that first allows us to take that initial leap in the dark, to encounter God at deeper levels of ourselves. And it is trust that guides the intimate refashioning of our being, the transformation of our pain, woundedness, and unconscious motivation into the person God intended us to be.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Afflictive emotions like grief, anger, jealousy, envy, vanity, discouragement, and pride are rooted in the fact that we don't know what our real motivation is. The thrust of Jesus' initial teaching in the Gospel is the challenge to grow up! Our drive to obtain the symbols in an environment of security and survival, affection and esteem, and power and control is doomed to frustration.

## **Session Fifty Four**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I waited patiently for the Beloved,  
Who came to me and heard  
my cry.

(From Psalm 40)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Instead of worrying about the guarantees for the future life, we need to trust God and believe that if we do what we can to love and serve God and our neighbor in this life, God will take care of the future. We must seek God more and more in the present moment, which is in fact the only place where God can be found. Since God is eternal, God is not to be found in the future but in the present.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Listening to the words of Jesus is not so much paying attention to what is said, but rather to the experience that is communicated at the deepest level of our being by the divine presence. This is what attracts us. It is not just words, but the eternal Word of God that we assimilate and by which we are assimilated. This is what makes us Christians – and at the same time, it makes us pray in our very being. This is the ultimate purpose of every form of prayer, devotion, ritual, or sacrament.

## **Session Fifty Five**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I will trust in You, O Love;  
be gracious to me,  
and raise me up, that I may  
conquer my fears!  
(From Psalm 41)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Where does Centering Prayer come from? Its source is the Trinity dwelling within us. It is rooted in God's life within us. I don't think that we reflect about this truth nearly enough.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The word of God in Scripture orientates us towards the transformation of our entire being. "God the Father spoke only one word and he spoke it in an eternal silence, and it is in silence that we hear it." (St. John of the Cross, *Maxims*). – Martha represents those in the Purgative level. Mary is entering into the Illuminative level. In this state, words and reasoning give way to intuition and the direct transmission of Jesus' divine presence. Mary can hear this level because of the increase of her faith. Her love moves her faith to a deeper level of listening and to its fruit, interior freedom.

## **Session Fifty Six**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

As a hart longs for flowing streams,  
so longs my soul for You,  
O Beloved.

(From Psalm 42)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The Trinitarian life is manifested in us primarily by our hunger for God. Centering Prayer comes out of the life of God moving within us. Our relationship with Christ moves to new depths and to new levels of intimacy as we grow in the practice of Center Prayer.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Death is the only cure for the false self. – Only the death of the false self brings liberation from the drives for survival and security, affection and esteem, and power and control, and from over identification with a group or role.

## **Session fifty Seven**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

My hope is in the Beloved,  
my strength and my joy,  
O my soul,  
open the door to Love!  
(From Psalm 43)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

As we sit in Centering Prayer, we are connecting with the divine life within us. It is already there waiting to be activated. As we sit in the presence of the Trinity within us, our prayer unfolds in relationship with Christ.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The Christian journey is not a magic carpet to bliss, a career, or a success story. It is a series of humiliations of the false self. Divine wisdom works both in prayer and action to free us from the undigested emotional junk of a lifetime that is warehoused in the body. I have called this process of healing the "divine therapy."

## **Session Fifty Eight**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Rise up! Pray for a change of heart!  
Then will the Indwelling Companion Presence  
deliver you with steadfast love!

(From Psalm 44)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Centering Prayer is simply a humble method of trying to access that infinite goodness by letting go of ourselves. Consent to God's presence and action symbolized by the sacred word is nothing else than self-surrender and trust.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Every time there is a significant growth in our spiritual development all our relationships change – to God, to ourselves, to other people, and to all creation. We become a new person.

From this arises a new kind of activity which might be called "contemplative service." Contemplative service is service that comes from the experience of the divine indwelling – from the Spirit living and at work within us. It is God in us serving God in others.



## **Session Fifty Nine**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

The Beloved is our refuge and our strength,  
a loving Presence in times of trouble.

(From Psalm 46)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The practice of contemplative prayer (and in fact Centering Prayer) is not an effort to make the mind blank, but to move beyond discursive thinking and affective prayer to the level of communing with God, which is a more intimate kind of exchange.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The divine indwelling is the doctrine that God dwells within us; hence, there is no place to go and find God. – Each of us as a Christian is another “word-made-flesh” called to manifest Jesus

Christ in our time, to our friends, family, and the people with whom we work. That is what brings the gospel to life and builds the Christian community.

## **Session Sixty**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

“Be still and know that I am Love.  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth!”

(From Psalm 46)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Centering Prayer is the opening of mind and heart – our whole being – to God beyond thoughts, words, and emotions. Moved by God’s sustaining grace, we open our awareness to God, who we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing – closer than consciousness itself.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Contemplation is not only prayer but action as well. And not only prayer and action, but the gift of one’s inmost being and all that one is. We are to allow God to be God in us. Each of us is inherently capable of giving God that glory. Hence, the incredible dignity of a human person.

## **Session Sixty One**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Within the stronghold of open hearts  
the Beloved's voice can be heard.

(From Psalm 48)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Contemplative prayer is a process of interior transformation, a relationship initiated by God and leading, if we consent, to divine union.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

If we read John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul* from the perspective of the unconscious, a remarkable light is shed on his extraordinary teaching. The Night of Spirit feels like dying. But it isn't death. It is liberation from the tyranny of the false self. It is the necessary preparation for the full transmission of divine light, life, and love.

## **Session Sixty Two**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Be not afraid to discover  
the Treasure within,  
to seek the gold hidden in  
the garden of your heart.  
(From Psalm 49)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Spiritual transformation is more the work of the Spirit than that of the human person. In fact, growth in divine union carries with it the need to diminish our human activity and to learn to wait upon the Lord.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The reading of Scripture is the basis and support for all our ways of relating to God. However developed our contemplative or meditative practices may become, they still need to be nourished by Scripture. The practice of Lectio Divina (sacred reading or more exactly sacred listening to a book we believe to be divinely inspired) is a method developed very early in Christian times. You find it in the desert fathers and mothers of the fourth century. You find it in the homilies of the fathers of the church who absorbed the teaching of Jesus and interpreted it in the light of their personal experience of relating to Jesus.

## **Session Sixty Three**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Create in me a clean heart,  
O Gracious One,  
and put a new and right spirit  
within me.

(From Psalm 51)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The essence of contemplation is the trusting and loving faith by which God both elevates the human person and purifies the conscious and unconscious obstacles in us that oppose the values of the gospel and the work of the Spirit. Contemplative prayer in the classic or strict sense of the term is “the narrow way that leads to life.”

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The method of Lectio Divina has been described as methodless. A relationship with God cannot be structured or controlled. It is spontaneous. It follows the same pattern we use in getting acquainted with another human being. We have to hang out together. At first our exchanges are awkward. We make sure that our hair is parted right and our tie is on straight. We walk on eggshells lest we behave improperly or say the wrong thing.

## **Session Sixty Four**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Blessed are those who trust in  
the steadfast love of the Counselor  
for ever and ever.

(From Psalm 52)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The practice of Centering Prayer is not contemplation in the strict sense of the term but a preparation for it. In the broad sense of the term, it might be called the first step on the ladder of contemplative prayer. As a rule, we do not know when our prayer becomes contemplation. We only know that we are moving in this direction through our practice.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

True friendship is characterized by commitment. We can walk away from an acquaintance, but we cannot walk away from a friend without breaking someone's heart. As we move towards a commitment with a particular person, there is usually a crisis. We ask ourselves, "Can I share my problems and difficulties with this person? Will he keep my secrets? Will she still love me if she knows all about me?" These are important questions. One would be wise to resolve them before making a permanent commitment.

## **Session Sixty Five**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

The Holy Spirit seeks out hearts  
that have been broken,  
ever ready to bless them with  
strength and new life.

(From Psalm 53)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

As our practice of Centering Prayer becomes more habitual, the action of the Spirit's gifts of wisdom and understanding become more powerful and gradually take over our prayer, enabling us to rest habitually in the presence of God. This experience is not necessarily felt during prayer, but is experienced in its effects in daily life.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

God invites us into a deeper commitment: to let go of the false self, to accept him as our divine Therapist, and to show up for our daily interviews. If you don't show up regularly, a busy therapist might say, "There are plenty of other people who want my services. Please find somebody else." – Fortunately for us, God is not like this. If you miss your interviews, God says, "It's up to you. If you want to get well, come for treatment. If you're not yet ready, I'll wait for you." Meanwhile we have lost the opportunity to develop right now the special graces of the invitation.

## **Session Sixty Six**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Hear my prayer, O Holy One;  
give ear to the words of  
my mouth.

(From Psalm 54)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

As the Spirit becomes predominant in our Centering Prayer, the use of the sacred word during our time of Centering Prayer may become less and less necessary or important. As long as we find that we are attracted to thoughts or feelings going by on the level of our memory or imagination, we freely make use of the sacred word not to push the thoughts away, but to reaffirm our original intention of consenting to God's presence.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

It is moving from one inner center to a deeper one, from one ordinary psychological awareness to the level of our spiritual faculties, and from one level of our spiritual faculties to our inmost being or true self. Finally, there is the moving through our inmost being into the divine presence itself which is the source out of which we emerge at every microcosmic moment of time.



## **Session Sixty Seven**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

I offered my fears to the Beloved,  
and Love heard my cry;  
I sought the One who ever listens;  
once again, I knew Love's Presence.  
(From Psalm 55)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The actual work of Centering Prayer is consenting to God's presence and in doing so letting go of the present moment with its psychological content. If a thought or feeling stirs unconscious programs along with their commentaries, then before we "get on the boat," we simply return ever-so-gently to the sacred word – renewing our intention to consent to God's work and action within us.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Our relationship with God can become more and more intimate. It moves beyond friendship into various levels of union. Union can go on unfolding both in this life and for all eternity. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, we will continue to grow in the knowledge and love of God forever. There is no completion to the human experiment. It is open-ended. There is a limit to what we can do in this body, but there may be no limit in the next life.

## **Session Sixty Eight**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Be merciful to me, O Beloved!  
I open my heart to You,  
for in You is Love and Wisdom.  
(From Psalm 57)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

In Centering Prayer we need to develop a certain joyful acceptance of our thoughts. We can't avoid them all. If we could, we would already be perfect in contemplation. Spiritual transformation is a process that is going to take some time and may not even be completed in this lifetime.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

If we are open and available to this presence, our lives will be transformed. The spiritual journey is a struggle to be ever more available to God and to let go of the obstacles to that transforming process. The Gospel is not merely an invitation to be a better person. It is an invitation to become divine. It invites us to share the interior life with the Trinity.

## **Session Sixty Nine**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Let your mind be guided by truth,  
your heart informed by Mercy;  
then will you know peace and joy.

(From Psalm 60)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

In Centering Prayer we are developing the capacity to wait upon God with loving attentiveness. The loving character is expressed by our fidelity to the practice of Centering Prayer and our patience while doing it.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The Trinity, of course, is not just present in our inmost being but throughout all creation. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "God is existence. Hence God is present in everything that exists." The question is, what kind of presence are we dealing with? God is present to us at every level of our being.

## **Session Seventy**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Lead me to the Rock that is  
my strength,  
for You alone are my refuge,  
your steadfast love conquers  
my fears.

(From Psalm 61)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

In our practice of Centering Prayer, the sacred word is a gesture of the consent of our spiritual will to God's presence in our inmost being. The sacred word expresses our intention, the choice of our will to open and surrender to God's presence. We do not repeat the sacred word continually. We only use it to maintain our intention of faith and love toward God.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Lectio Divina is a methodless method of prayer, the dynamics of which are similar to the growth of a personal relationship with anyone. Hence, we have to give time and put energy into it. After we have investigated the other person's qualities, likes, and capacities, we have to be willing to take the plunge of trust. In the case of our relationship with Christ, we are faced with the call to discipleship and we experience a crisis of faith. We ask ourselves, "Can I really trust a God whom I have come to know so intimately? Given my circumstances, do I really want to commit myself to a life of prayer?"

## **Session Seventy One**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

For You alone my soul waits in silence;  
From the Beloved comes my salvation.  
(From Psalm 62)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The primary function of the sacred word is not to push thoughts away or to thin them out. It is rather to express our intention to love God, to be in God's presence, and to submit to the Spirit's action during a time of prayer.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The basic issue is, "Can I trust this God enough to commit myself to a life of prayer and service?" Union with God does not normally interfere with other relationships. It simply changes our attitude toward them so that we can persevere in them, not for the sake of what we get out of them, but from a motive of unselfish love.

## **Session Seventy Two**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

O Love, You are my Beloved, and I long for You,  
my soul thirsts for You; all that is within me thirsts,  
as in a dry and barren land with no water.

(From Psalm 63)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The chief effect of Centering Prayer is to live from the center of our being. This of course does not mean that we do not interact with the world. On the contrary, we interact with the world better than before because we are not defending ourselves from people or circumstances, but living from reality as it unfolds. Centering Prayer, then, is not just a method of prayer but initiates a process that involves the response of our whole being to the gospel and its values.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Lectio Divina (sacred reading) leads to a personal relationship with God. The ancient monastic way of doing lectio does not mean reading a lot. It means reading the text until you feel the call of the Spirit either to reflect on a particular passage, sentence, or phrase, or to respond to the good things that you have read or heard. You may want to praise God, ask for something, or converse with God. Or you might feel like pouring out your heart to God. There is a movement from our concentrative practices to the receptive disposition that is essential to resting in God.

## **Session Seventy Three**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Praise belongs to You,  
O Indwelling Beloved,  
and to You we commit our lives,  
to You who hear our prayers!

(From Psalm 65)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

When we are practicing Centering Prayer regularly (twice a day), there is a constant wearing away of our opposition to grace. If we continue our regular practice of Centering Prayer eventually this resistance to God's grace begins to dissipate.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Here is a good symbol of what takes place in contemplative prayer – It is the capacity to give our recollected presence to God and to enjoy God's presence in return without saying anything or without trying to prove anything. We are just relishing the sense of communion, even if there is not a special experience of consolation.

## **Session Seventy Four**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Awaken us to your kindness,  
enter into your Holy Temple,  
our heart!

(From Psalm 65)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Our own activity cannot heal us. Healing only comes to us as we gradually submit to the divine presence and action within us. Pure faith does not seek rewards of any kind, especially consolations, which might be called “spiritual junk food.” The solid food of the spiritual journey is pure faith. It is the “narrow way” that leads to life and is exercised by waiting upon God in loving attentiveness.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord’s Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The heart of prayer is to recognize the presence and action of God and consent to it. We do not have to go anywhere; God is already with us. Effort refers to the future and to what we do not yet have. Consent refers to the present moment and its content. Faith tells us that we already have God – the divine indwelling.

The most intimate relationship with God is to be completely present to God in whatever we are doing.



## **Session Seventy Five**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Blessed be the holy Name  
of the Beloved,  
Loving Companion Presence,  
who has embraced me  
and renewed my life.  
(From Psalm 66)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

When we sit down to do Centering Prayer and form our intention, we know that the divine presence is already there. We do not create it. All we have to do is consent by ever so gently introducing the sacred word. The divine energy flows into us and through us. In its purest form it is available twenty-four hours a day at maximum strength.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Once the presence of God is a permanent part of daily life, there is a sense of spaciousness in the midst of all our activities. When difficulties arise because of events or other people, and our emotional reactions start to give us trouble, we can surround them with God's presence. This awareness relativizes the importance of the compulsion that we have to do something about certain situations, but if we do them from a false self-motivation, we will not accomplish anything. When we act from the conviction of God's presence within us and with openness to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, action becomes effective.

## **Session Seventy Six**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Sing to the Beloved,  
the Name above all names;  
lift up a song to the Most High;  
exult before the Holy One!  
(From Psalm 68)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

By consenting, we open to God as God is without trying to figure out who or what God is. God communicates himself on only one condition – our consent.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Contemplative prayer crosses over doctrinal differences and emphasizes the essentials of the Christian religion, which is the lived experience of Christ and the love for others that flows from that experience.

## **Session Seventy Seven**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Sing to the Beloved,  
O nations of the earth;  
sing praises to the One  
who is Love.

(From Psalm 68)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

There will be times when contemplatives feel they cannot pray anymore. All that is left to them is the desire to pray. The desire to pray is itself prayer. Someone who wants to pray is praying.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

Contemplative prayer, however profound, is not the perfect reflection of full manifestation of God. Nor does action, however effective from a human point of view, manifest God. It is only when the two are habitually working together that we have made significant progress. At that point we become an apostle in our very being, not only in what we say or do. We are apostles in the sense of being immersed in the infusion of divine love that the apostles received at Pentecost, which is the way the early fathers of the church understood it.

## **Session Seventy Eight**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Come to my aid, Gentle Healer,  
for my prayer is to You.

In your perfect timing,  
in the abundance of your Love,  
answer my cry.

(From Psalm 69)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

The spiritual journey is basically a surrender in blind trust to our conviction that what we hope to find on the journey we either already have or will certainly find. There is no guarantee that we will arrive safely on the basis of the evidence or our circumstances. We must let the wind of the Holy Spirit take us where we hope to go.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

In the deep rest of contemplative prayer the human body receives permission, so to speak, to evacuate the emotional junk of a lifetime – What we need to heal, our psychological indigestion, is a thorough evacuation of the emotional trauma itself. – In the purification of the unconscious this healing takes place through the process of contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer gradually brings about the liberation of whatever prevents the presence of God from becoming a part of our constant awareness. – This is the experience of God loving us into existence.

## **Session Seventy Nine**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

In You, O my Beloved,  
do I take refuge;

Let me never feel separated  
from You!

(From Psalm 71)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Without having accepted the trip into the unknown, one is really not a candidate for contemplation. God has to lead us into a place that involves complete reversal of our prepackaged values, a complete undoing of all our carefully laid plans, and a lot of letting go of our preconceived ideas.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

If we really believe in the divine indwelling and the promptings of the Spirit, we are more apt to listen. And the more we listen, the more we realize that the inspirations of the Spirit have to be heard. We cease to drown them out with our brilliant flights of metaphysics, theology, devotion, or whatever we think is prayer.

## **Session Eighty**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

Truly the Beloved is near to those  
with open hearts,  
to those who abandon themselves  
to Love.

(From Psalm 73)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

We must gradually recover the conviction, not just the feeling, of the Divine Indwelling, the realization that God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is living in us. This is the heart of the spiritual journey, to which Centering Prayer is totally in service.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The term “private room” is a metaphor for the spiritual level of our ordinary being. This is a private place beyond the flow of our ordinary psychological awareness, with its endless stream of thoughts, commentaries, and emotional reactions to events taking place in daily life or regurgitated in our memory. – This movement into our private room, into the innermost part of our being, is a movement of opening to the divine indwelling. – We do not make our minds blank. Rather, we deliberately open ourselves to God whom we believe is present in our inmost being.

## **Session Eighty One**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

As for me, I delight in walking  
with the Beloved;  
I invited the Friend into my heart,  
that I might live with Love.  
(From Psalm 73)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

In Centering Prayer, then, purity of intention is the primary focus of the practice. It is a matter of love. That is why it moves us away from our former dependence (conscious or unconscious) on thinking about God and on making acts of devotion to feel we are doing something when we pray. The Spirit now has taken over our activity and prays in us.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

When we sit in silent prayer, our whole being is begging for the Holy Spirit, the supreme gift of the Father and the Son. There is no greater gift that we can ask for. If we receive the Holy Spirit, we have everything. By entering our private room and closing our eyes to the external and internal environment, we rest in the presence of the Father who loves us and who sent his Son Jesus and his Spirit to lead and guide us to divine union.

## **Session Eighty Two**

### **Verse of the Day**

(Read verse twice)

When I call upon You, O Beloved,  
pride and arrogance flee,  
and your strength upholds me.

(From Psalm 74)

### **Reading to Prepare for Silence**

Centering Prayer becomes contemplation when the work of the Spirit absorbs our prayer and takes over. This can eventually be our habitual state of prayer, which is resting in God. We do not get to that state, or course, by our own efforts.

### **Time of Silence**

**(20 minutes followed by Lord's Prayer)**

### **Reading for Reflection**

The spiritual journey is unique to each of us. People have different attractions that help to establish and maintain growth of interior silence during prayer. The attraction to the center of our being is the awakening to the fact of the divine indwelling. – If you practice Centering Prayer regularly, it will do you. – Talking about it, writing about it, does not do it. Doing it does.