

Centering Prayer

(based on the work of Christopher Rupert, S.J.)

Centering prayer is a very simple form of prayer, frequently without words; it is an opening of our hearts to the Spirit dwelling within us. In this prayer we spiral down into the deepest center of ourselves. It is the point of stillness within us where we most experience being created by a loving God who is breathing us into life. To enter into centering prayer one is helped by a belief and recognition of our dependency on God. One can go about it in this way:

- Sit quietly, comfortable and relaxed
- Rest within your longing and desire for God
- Move to the center within your deepest self. This movement can be facilitated by imaging yourself slowly descending in an elevator, or by walking down flights of stairs, or descending a mountain, or going down into the water, as in a deep pool.
- In the stillness, become aware of God's presence; peacefully absorb God's love.

In centering prayer we go beyond thought and image, beyond the senses and the rational mind to the center of our being where God is working a wonderful work.

Psalm 46:10 Be still and know that I am God!

Romans 8:15 The Spirit cries out within is "Abba ... Father".

Romans 8:26 The Spirit expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words.

Centering Prayer Using A Mantra

One means of centering is the use of the "mantra" or "prayer word". The mantra can be a single word or phrase. It may be a word from scripture or one that arises spontaneously from within your heart. The word or phrase is repeated slowly within oneself in harmony with one's breathing. For example if one were to use the phrase "Jesus, redeemer," one might say "Jesus" while inhaling and "redeemer" while exhaling.

- Choose some suitable mantra.
- Stretch and relax for a few moments. Thank God for God's goodness.
- Take any comfortable posture that will not lead to sleep. (Any posture is suitable that keeps the shoulders straight with the back erect and head up.)
- Repeat the mantra you have chosen over and over again to yourself in rhythm with your

breathing until your mind is blank.

- Cease the mantra until a distraction enters your mind. At this point recognize the distraction, label it and "put it In the bag" to look at later.
- Resume the same mantra until your mind is once again blank. Then proceed as before when distractions occur.
- Cease after a comfortable period, but not beyond twenty minutes. You may find an alarm clock helpful at the beginning. As you come out of the prayer do so gradually. Usually it is helpful to recite the Lord's Prayer or some prayer of praise very slowly.
- After the Centering-Mantra exercise is over you may desire to unbag your distractions and take note of any that merit further attention.