

## CENTERING PRAYER



"Centering prayer is a method designed to deepen the relationship with Christ begun, for example, in lectio divina and to facilitate the development of contemplative prayer by preparing our faculties to cooperate with this gift. It is an attempt to present the teaching of earlier times (e.g. the Cloud of Unknowing) in an updated form and to put a certain order and regularity into it. It is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer; it simply puts other kinds of prayer into a new and fuller perspective. During the time of prayer, we consent to God's presence and action within. At other times our attention moves outward to discover God's presence everywhere else."

(Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, p.139)

### **Guidelines for Centering Prayer**

- 1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your desire and intention to consent to God's presence and divine action within you.** To choose a sacred word, simply ask the Holy Spirit to provide it – then wait until you know it. The sacred word should be short and meaningful to you. Some examples are: God, Jesus, Abba, Father, Mother, Trust, Love, Peace, Shalom, Silence.
- 2. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Breathe deeply once or twice (fully in and fully out). Enter into yourself and silently, gently introduce the sacred word, repeating it as necessary as you let go awareness of your surroundings and attachment to your inner thoughts.** Be sure your arms and legs remain uncrossed and your back is straight and supported. If you fall asleep, rest. If you awaken, return to your prayer.
- 3. When thoughts intrude, repeat your sacred word and return gently to the quietness within.** You may notice body sensations, feelings, memories, or inner chatter happening here and there as you pray. This is normal. When it happens, return to your sacred word and let it lead you back to the quietness.
- 4. When the chime signals the end of the prayer period, remain for a moment in silence with eyes closed.** Slowly allow yourself to become aware of your body and your environment. As you open your eyes, breathe deeply and move or stretch slowly and gently, allowing the fruits of your silence to have a place in the rest of your day. (Adapted from Thomas Keating's *Open Mind, Open Heart*, p.139-141.)