



God in Jesus: An Incarnational Faith

Centering Prayer

Introduction

Christian traditions, ancient and modern, have recognized many and varied ways of prayer and praying. Just as our dialogue with friends and family takes on the language and familiarity of our customs, regional vocabulary, and our relationships, so does our prayer. There is no right way to pray, and no wrong way. God welcomes all forms of conversation and none are turned away from having the ear of God. Today's liturgy includes a form of prayer that may be new to you. It is called Centering Prayer, and it has ancient roots in Christian monastic and mystic traditions.

The Method of Centering Prayer (adapted from www.centeringprayer.com)

Centering Prayer is a method designed to facilitate the development of contemplative prayer. It is an attempt to present the teaching of earlier time 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.

The Guidelines

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When you become aware of other thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. Silently, reverently repeat the Lord's Prayer.

Closing Worship

Note: Italicized portions are to be said by all.

Opening

Book of Common Prayer, pg 213

Presider: God be with you,

Response: *And also with you.*

Presider: Let us pray.

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Scripture Matthew 16:13-17

New Revised Standard Version

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.’

Reflection: *Teach us the path, show us the way.* by Malcolm Boyd from *Are you Running with me, Jesus?*

They say that everyone has a cross to bear, Jesus. And you once said, “Take up your cross and follow me.” What do those things mean? I think they mean that every person ultimately has to face up to reality – face one's own calling, destiny, nature and responsibilities.

In your own life, Jesus, you faced reality directly and unequivocally. You incarnated the truth as you believed it. You didn't pander to any easy or obvious popularity. You attacked the hypocrisies of the human power structure head on. You rejected status quo in favor of obedience to the Realm of God. And when it came to taking consequences, you didn't shy away from torture and execution.

The way of the cross was your understanding of your mission and your faithfulness to it. The way of the cross seems to be, for every individual Christian, the reality that dictates styles of life, defines mission, and brings a person into communion with you.

Help me bear my cross on the way of the cross, Jesus.

The Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Savior
Christ has taught us,
we are bold to say,

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

As our Savior Christ
has taught us,
we now pray,

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen*

Centering Prayer refrain (see the instructions above)

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, may I know you in my heart.

Blessing

Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. *Amen.*