

Instructions for Centering Prayer

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to the presence and action of God within you.

- Your sacred word does not necessarily have to be a “holy” word. It is a sacred word not because of its inherent meaning, but because it represents your intention *to consent to the presence and action of God within you*.
- Suggested sacred words include: God, Lord, Jesus, Spirit, Silence, Peace, Love, Calm, Faith, Trust, Mercy, or any other word that signifies to you your consent to God’s presence and action within you. What is important is that the word is sacred *to you*, because of what it signifies.
- Fix this word fast to your heart, so that it is always there, come what may.
- Let your sacred word be for you a symbol of your desire to surrender your whole being to God.
- Once you have chosen your sacred word, do not change it during your Centering Prayer period, because that would be to start thinking again. Use of the same word over time allows it to sink deep within you, and it then becomes able to act as a trigger whenever you go into prayer.
- Remember that it is your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within you that makes this prayer and not simply a relaxation exercise.

2. Sitting comfortably with your eyes closed, silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within you.

- You should sit comfortably enough that you are not distracted from your prayer by discomfort in your body during your prayer period.
- Learning to pray this way while sitting normally helps you become able to enter Centering Prayer anywhere – sitting in a car, on a bus or plane, etc. – without being obvious.
- Closing your eyes during Centering Prayer helps you let go of what is going on in the external world around you during your prayer period.

3. When you become aware of thoughts, feelings, or sensations, gently return to the sacred word.

- The arising of thoughts, feelings, and sensations is an inevitable and normal part of Centering Prayer. It is helpful to avoid judging yourself when these arise.
- As soon as you become aware that a thought, feeling, or sensation has distracted you, symbolize your desire to return to God’s presence in prayer by gently returning your attention to your sacred word. Centering prayer is a prayer of focused *intention*.
- Gently returning your attention to your sacred word is meant to be done with a minimum of effort, and this is the only activity that is initiated by you during Centering Prayer.

4. At the end of the prayer period, remain silent for a few minutes with your eyes closed.

- Give yourself a few minutes to become aware of your physical surroundings again, and to make the transition into daily life, bringing the atmosphere of Centering Prayer with you.

It is recommended that you practice centering prayer twice a day, for 20 minutes each time. However, any amount of time even once a day can be beneficial.