

## Ways to Pray ~ What is Centering Prayer?

Centering prayer is a form of contemplative prayer where we seek to quiet scattered thoughts and desires in the still center of Christ's presence. In this prayer we open our minds and hearts to the presence of God within us. God calls us to friendship. In this kind of prayer we let go of the things that get in the way of our friendship with God. We wait for God as we would wait for a friend. It takes time to become intimate friends. Our relationship with God takes time, too. In centering prayer we take time to just be with God, realizing that God is beyond all human thoughts, feelings and concepts. In this kind of prayer we do not use thoughts or words. Rather, we let go of any thoughts or feelings when they come to mind so we can make a space for God. The following steps will help you to pray in this way.

- Choose a quiet space where you can be comfortable and where you can be uninterrupted and uninhibited.
- Once you are comfortable, light a candle or put on a soft light, take a few deep breaths, and relax. Then, if you'd like, set the timer or stop watch for twenty minutes.
- Close your eyes and recall your desire to just be in God's presence.
- Choose a simple word or phrase to repeat to yourself (for instance: love, peace, Good Shepherd).
- When thoughts or feelings come into your mind, let them go. Do not allow them to take you away from God's presence. Distractions will come; this is normal. Think of this kind of prayer as the prayer of "letting go." Don't be surprised if you spend the whole time letting go of thoughts and feelings. With practice you will experience something happening in your life: a new sense of peace, a new awareness of God's great love for you. Be patient!
- Rest in the center of God's love. Trust that the Holy Spirit, who abides in the depths of your spirit, will connect you with God.
- When your prayer has ended, slowly come back to the here and now and thank God for being with you - in this prayer and always.

O God, you are my God, and I long for you.  
My whole being desires you; like a dry, worn-out,  
and waterless land, my soul is thirsty for you.

Let me see you in the sanctuary  
let me see how mighty and glorious you are.

Your constant love is better than life itself,  
and so I will praise you.

I will give you thanks as long as I live;  
I will raise my hands to you in prayer.

My soul will feast and be satisfied,  
and I will sing glad songs of praise to you.

Psalm 63:1-5