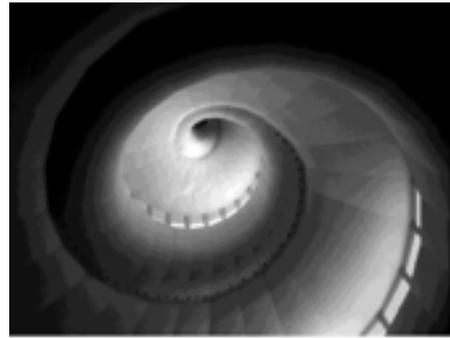


Daily Spiritual Practice: Tuesday, July 6:

Live, Love, Share...Our Calling

CENTERING PRAYER



Purpose:

In centering prayer the emphasis is on creating a space of quiet openness in which we become aware of God's presence with us. It is called centering prayer because our attention is gathered in and centered on perceiving and receiving God. Centering prayer uses two "tools" to help us pull away from distractions and move us to listening. These two tools are breath and a prayer word (sometimes called a sacred word).

Process:

1. Sit somewhere comfortable, both feet on the ground, hands open in lap. Close your eyes.
2. Offer a brief prayer to state your intention to God and to ask for help and guidance. (For example: "I'm here, God, waiting, listening, open.")
3. Use your breath to create a sense of peace and letting go into God. Breathe deeply, slowly, calmly, starting with several cleansing breaths that end in an audible sigh. As you fill your lungs and exhale, feel the tension in your muscles and your entire body flow out with the air. Continue to breathe in a regular, natural rhythm from your abdomen rather than your chest.
4. Focus on breathing God in, breathing all else out until you feel calm and centered.
5. Continue paying attention to your breath as you focus your body, mind, and spirit on the reality that God is present and that you are here with the intention of loving and being loved by God.
6. Listen beneath or within your breath for a prayer word (or phrase) that expresses the desires and needs of your heart in this time. Don't struggle for the word. Trust that it will arise as you continue to be still and open.
7. When you have been made aware of the prayer word or phrase, repeat it silently to yourself in rhythm with your breathing.

Example:

(breathing in) Fill me...
(breathing out) ...O God
(breathing in) [silence]
(breathing out) ...peace

8. When distracting thoughts pull you away from centering in God, bring yourself back by returning to your prayer word and the rhythm of your breathing. Don't fight the thoughts so much as recognizing and letting them go as you re-center on God through your prayer word and breathing.
9. Continue in this quiet pattern of presence before God for whatever amount of time you feel drawn to.
10. When the time for prayer has elapsed, offer a brief word of thanks to God, take several more deep breaths, become aware of the space around you, move or stretch, and open your eyes when you feel ready.