

What resources are available?

Members of the Spiritual Growth Resources Committee will come to your parish to do a two-hour workshop on Centering Prayer. The workshop will include teaching and individual experience, with time for discussion afterward.

You will find Father Thomas Keating's book, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, and books and tapes by his colleague, Father Basil Pennington, to be helpful.

The website www.thecentering.org offers more information. (The contents of this brochure have been adapted from that website.)

The Diocesan Ministry Resource Center at Church House (phone 215-627-6434, ext. 110 or www.mrconline.org) also has materials available.

How do we get permission to do this?

God gives us permission, through Jesus' naming us brothers and sisters, and through the Holy Spirit's on-going presence in our world as Comforter and Advocate, to approach God with both spoken prayer and in silence.

Centering Prayer is a method for incorporating awareness of the eternal, silent presence of God into our daily lives. God is eternally present. Our busy, noisy lives can drown out and crowd out our awareness of God.

We are free to decide for ourselves whether to share in this gift of silence and rest in God.

The Spiritual Growth Resources Committee hopes that you will use this brief introduction to explore Centering Prayer, by yourself or with a group.

About the Spiritual Growth Resources Committee

The Spiritual Growth Resources Committee consists of lay and ordained persons whose mission is to support and strengthen the spiritual life of the diocese.

Members bring a wide variety of interests and experiences to their ministry of service to enhance the prayer life of parishes and individuals.

If you have an interest in participating in the work of this committee, contact the chair listed below.

How to contact us

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To access this and other resources on the web

Go to

www.stpaulschestnuthill.org

Scroll down and click on:

Diocese of Pennsylvania

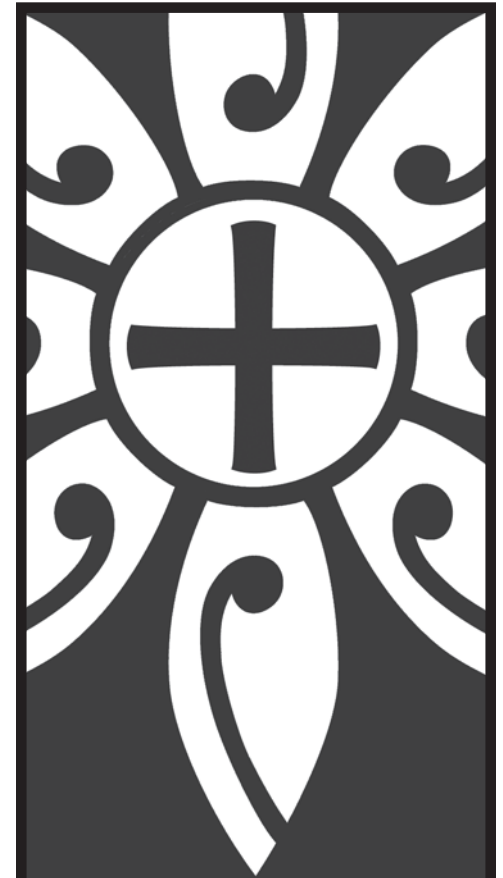
Spiritual Growth Resources

This takes you to the Spiritual Growth Resources Committee's introduction under

Links to Resources

You will find brochures and information to browse or print.

Centering Prayer



What is Centering Prayer?

How can we bring Centering Prayer to people in our congregation?

What resources are available to help us?

A brochure in the Spiritual Disciplines series created for individuals and parishes by the Spiritual Growth Resources Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania



What is Centering Prayer?

Centering prayer is a method – not an end in itself.

Developed by The Rev. Thomas Keating, a Benedictine, it is part of a tradition of silent prayer that goes back to the early centuries of the Church.

Father Keating adapted this practice to help today's people learn another, very rich way of being present to God – the way of silence. In the silence, we seek simply to rest in God's presence, not to achieve anything.

Father Keating recommended that we undertake two times of centering prayer a day, for at least 20 minutes each, so that our prayer times become ordered and regular.

It is the habit and faithfulness to silent prayer that gradually transforms our awareness of God's presence in our lives.

The hardest part may be to find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed!



Guidelines for Centering Prayer

- † **Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.** Choose a simple word by asking the Holy Spirit to inspire you with a word that is especially suitable for you at this time. (Some examples would be: Father, Lord, Jesus, Mother, Love or perhaps Peace)
- † **Sitting comfortably and with your eyes closed, settle briefly, and then silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.** Close your eyes to let go of whatever is going on around and within you. Introduce the sacred word inwardly and as gently as laying a feather on a piece of silk.
- † **When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.** Thoughts are a normal part of prayer. Notice them but do not become involved with them. This gentle returning is the only "work" that we do in Centering Prayer. As your prayer time continues, even the word itself may fade or disappear from your mind.
- † **At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.** This allows gentle adjustment to the returning of our external senses, and allows us to bring the peace of silence into daily life.

How do I begin?

Centering Prayer may be done individually or as part of a group. Here are some suggestions for beginning Centering Prayer.

Individual Prayer

Commit to trying Centering Prayer, twice a day, for at least two weeks. Deliberately choose a place and times when you will not be disturbed. Father Keating recommends first thing in the morning and then a second time in the late afternoon or early evening. If you fall asleep during your prayer time, you need more rest, or perhaps have just eaten a meal. Choose other times! Simplicity is the key to Centering Prayer. It is not a technique, a program or self-hypnosis. It is not a relaxation exercise or limited to the "felt" presence of God. It is simply time spent in God's presence, in which a simple word calls your attention back to silence and to God.

Centering Prayer Groups

Many people find that they appreciate the presence of others, also sitting in silence, to help them stay focused. A Centering Prayer Group can meet once or twice a week, or even daily, for a time of silence.

The group may want to begin with a spoken prayer or by reading a passage from the Bible. Do not let this introductory period become elaborate or long! Members of the group take time being timekeeper for the period of silence – usually 20-30 minutes long. The time-keeper should gently ring a soft bell or chime at the end of the silence. The group should respectfully allow two or three minutes of further silence in which to adjust to the external world. Sharing, gentle discussion, readings or journaling are appropriate follow-ups to Centering Prayer.