

THE CENTERING PRAYER INTRODUCTORY PROGRAM

Be still and know that I am God.

PSALM 46:10

Since 1984, Contemplative Outreach has been assisting churches, spiritual organizations, 12-step recovery groups, prison outreach programs, and other groups by offering practices to support a deepening relationship with God. Contemplative Outreach is a spiritual community and international nonprofit organization dedicated to the renewal of the Christian contemplative tradition through the practices of Centering Prayer, Welcoming Prayer, Lectio Divina and more. Fr. Thomas Keating, OCSO, is a founding member and the spiritual guide of Contemplative Outreach. He is the author of over 30 books including, *Open Mind Open Heart*, *Invitation to Love* and *Intimacy with God*.

To learn more, please visit
www.contemplativeoutreach.org.

Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer is a receptive method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer. Rather, it adds depth of meaning to all prayer and facilitates the movement from more active kinds of prayer into a receptive prayer of resting in God. Centering Prayer emphasizes prayer as a personal relationship with God and as a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Christ.

The Centering Prayer Introductory Program

For those new to Centering Prayer, local Contemplative Outreach chapters offer a Centering Prayer Introductory Program that has two parts: an Introductory Workshop and four to six Continuing Sessions. To schedule an Introductory Program, contact a Contemplative Outreach Contact Person in your area. Listings can be found at: www.contemplativeoutreach.org/community or on these local websites www.cochapters.com.

The Introductory Workshop

The Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop familiarizes participants with the method of Centering Prayer and its conceptual background and offers two opportunities to experience the prayer. The workshop consists of four presentations led by Contemplative Outreach commissioned presenters.

1. Prayer as Relationship
2. The Method of Centering Prayer
3. Thoughts and the Use of the Sacred Word
4. Deepening our Relationship with God

The Continuing Sessions

Following the Introductory Workshop, participants are invited to attend four to six Continuing Sessions which provide support, more background and the time needed to establish a personal Centering Prayer practice. The Sessions also include the opportunity to share the initial Centering Prayer experience with others who have made a similar commitment.

Each Continuing Session is led by an experienced facilitator and includes a period of Centering Prayer and group discussion. Details regarding the Continuing Sessions will be offered by the Workshop presenter.

Scheduling of the Continuing Sessions is flexible and can be arranged to fit the convenience of group members. Sessions can be convened on a weekly basis, on a weekend or in one or two day retreats when distance and logistics make it difficult to meet weekly.



Resources for the Continuing Sessions

Contemplative Outreach offers many wonderful resources that introduce Centering Prayer and the Christian contemplative heritage. Here are examples of the resources which may be used by your local chapter for the Continuing Sessions. These resources can be purchased at www.contemplativeoutreach.org/store.

DVDS

- **Centering Prayer: A Training Course for Opening to the Presence of God** This program provides all the instruction and support to learn and begin a Centering Prayer practice, including six DVDs, two audio CDs, 25 prayer cards, and a 91 page workbook of Centering Prayer training and wisdom from Fr. Thomas Keating, Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, and Fr. Carl Arico. Produced by Sounds True.
- **Six Continuing Sessions of the Introduction to the Centering Prayer Practice** These DVDs featuring Fr. Thomas Keating offer a deeper explanation of Centering Prayer.
- **Invitation from God** Beautifully filmed, this is a wonderful introduction to contemplation. The conversation between the film director and Fr. Thomas and the beauty of the silent images express what the contemplative life is all about.
- **The Contemplative Dimension of 12 Steps** This DVD set presents Centering Prayer as a means to practice the 11th step. It includes Fr. Thomas Keating teaching Centering Prayer to a 12-step audience, a teaching he calls, "The Human Condition," and many spiritual practices that are helpful in 12-step recovery.

BOOKS

- **Open Mind, Open Heart** by Fr. Thomas Keating This book is widely regarded as the basic text of Centering Prayer, written by one of its principal founders.

- **Forty Days to a Closer Walk with God** by J. David Muyskens
The author offers insightful guidance about this simple prayer practice that can lead to communion with God. The late J. David Muyskens was a retired minister of the Reformed Church in America.

ONLINE GROUP (FREE)

Centering Prayer One is an online support group facilitated by trained presenters. See <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/centeringprayer-one/info> or email centeringprayer-one-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Participating in a Centering Prayer Group

At the conclusion of the Continuing Sessions, participants are encouraged to start a new Centering Prayer group or join an existing one. These prayer groups support and encourage establishing a daily prayer practice. They provide an opportunity for Centering Prayer in a group setting and offer further enrichment for the contemplative spiritual journey. Centering Prayer groups usually meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Local Centering Prayer Groups can be found on the local websites listed at www.cochapters.com



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