

Centering Prayer

Notes on Centering Prayer from Stan Wood

We live in a world of gadgetry, noise, stress and information overload, often resulting in a deep yearning not only for physical rest, but also emotional and spiritual renewal. All too often our churches have not done enough to offer their members the well-revered practices that can lead to transformation in Christ. Many people, especially in our younger generations, feel that they must explore outside the Christian tradition to learn disciplines or techniques to meditate. Thankfully, more and more congregations are rediscovering that we who follow Christ have a long and glorious history of silent prayer and meditation- practices that are fully centered in and drawn from the well-springs of the life and passion of our Lord, with a firm reliance upon God's grace and the indwelling guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Meister Eckhart, the Catholic mystical theologian whose writings had a powerful influence on Martin Luther and other Reformation leaders, taught that:

"We must learn an inner solitude wherever or with whomsoever we may be. We must learn to penetrate "things" and find God there."

Centering Prayer is one of these authentically Christian practices that has been inspiring great devotion and "fruits of the Spirit" in those who are trained and practice regularly. Though the term "Centering Prayer" only has been widely adapted in recent decades, this spiritual practice is firmly rooted in Christian tradition dating back to the 4th Century Desert Fathers, following the Apostle Paul's injunction to put on the mind of Christ. [*Philippians 2:5-8*]

In addition to training and practice in Centering Prayer, this series will offer a brief background in the theology that grounds Centering Prayer. We will also explore many practical questions, including: Why is silence a "practice" that requires training and commitment? How can simply "sitting in silence" be challenging inner work, rather than mere relaxation? And why is the "direct experience of God in silence" regarded by so many theologians and catechists through the ages as the central height toward which all other methods of study and prayer lead?