

Some thoughts on Prayer



Prayer is nearly ubiquitous, almost a synonym for being human. Wherever people are found, there you will find someone reaching out to the oneness, the cosmos, the divine, the mystery. Through words, meditation, movement, offerings, renunciations, charity, good deeds, protest, dance, incense, and a host of other ways, human beings from remote antiquity have stretched to create connections beyond themselves to something larger, someone more fundamental.¹

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Liturgical collects²:

Invocation: indicating the person of Trinity addressed, usually God the Father	Heavenly Father,
Acknowledgement: description of a divine attribute that relates to the petition	loving shepherd of your people,
Petition:	we thank you for your servant James, who was faithful in the care and nurture of your flock;
Aspiration: The desired result	and we pray that we may follow the good of his example and grow into the fullness of the stature
Conclusion: indicating the mediation of Jesus Christ. Response by the people: Amen	of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Lectio Divina: Lectio Divina is a contemplative way of reading the Bible. It dates back to the early centuries of the Christian Church and was established as a monastic practice by Benedict in the 6th century. It is a way of praying the scriptures that leads us deeper into God's word. We slow down. We read a short passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully. We savour it. Scripture begins to speak to us in a new way. It speaks to us personally, and aids that union we have with God through Christ who is himself the Living Word.³

¹ Rabbi Bradley Artson <https://www.openhorizons.org/what-are-we-doing-when-we-pray.html>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collect#Structure>

³ <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/253799/1-What-is-Lectio-Divina.pdf>

Centering Prayer⁴ is a method designed to facilitate the development of contemplative prayer by preparing our faculties to receive this gift. . . . It is at the same time a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. This method of prayer is a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him. [1]

Centering Prayer is based on the wisdom saying of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:6): "If you want to pray, enter your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." Notice that "Father" refers to a personal relationship, whether you call it father, mother, brother, soul-friend, spouse or anything else.

The first step in Centering Prayer is to enter your inner room, which is symbolized by the heart in most traditions; that is, your innermost self beyond the senses and beyond thinking. . . .

Second, "close the door," symbolizing your intention of letting go of all thoughts, preoccupations, memories and plans during this time.

Finally, you pray in secret to the Father who speaks to you beyond words and who invites you to ever deeper silence. . . .

The steps I have just mentioned are guidelines. Instead of using a word or noticing your breath, you can also use a sacred image to return to. These symbols do not *establish* you in interior silence; they simply reaffirm your original *intention* to be in God's presence and to be open to the divine action. . . . The fruit of this prayer is not something you produce. You simply reduce the obstacles by providing an interior environment in which the Spirit can speak without words in the inmost depths of your being.

Me to You⁵:

"Reaching out" prayer is an act of reaching into, of giving yourself to, the receptive side God, to the Love that is always listening. This "reaching out" is not a denial of individuality; to the contrary it is an act of self-expression, of saying "here I am" to the Self in whose love all things unfold. It is establishing a relationship between You and You: one of them human and the other divine.

Imagine a Buddhist lighting incense and placing it in front of a statue of Kuan-Yin, and then bowing. Or a Christian doing the same before an icon of Mary. In the folding of the hands, in the kneeling, both are placing themselves in the presence of the deep Listening. They are doing the Great Work.



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⁴ <https://cac.org/centering-prayer-2018-12-12/>

⁵ <https://www.openhorizons.org/from-me-to-you-process-theology-and-prayer.html>