

Using Centering Prayer

Introduction

Centering prayer—which is both a way of relating with God and a discipline to foster this relationship—has been part of Catholic spirituality for more than two thousand years. This prayerful contemplation or meditation involves using breathing techniques while repeating a mantra or word to help to block out distractions and to focus on God.

Method

1. Allow at least 20 minutes for a centering prayer exercise.
2. Encourage the students to “rest in God” and to prepare to enter into contemplative prayer.

Follow these steps for centering prayer:

- Choose a sacred word that expresses the intention to consent to God’s presence, such as God, Jesus, Jesus Christ, Abba, Father, Mary, Amen, Love, Listen, Peace, Mercy, Let Go, Trust.
- Ask the students to sit comfortably with their eyes closed. Invite them to silently begin repeating the chosen sacred word as a symbol of consent to God’s presence. They may find it helpful to link the repetition of the sacred word to the rhythm of breathing. For example, if the sacred word is *Jesus Christ*, breath in “Jesus” and breathe out “Christ.” If the sacred word is *Jesus*, breathe in “Je-” and breathe out “-sus.”
 - During the time allowed, periodically remind the students to engage in quiet thought and to return to the sacred word. Thoughts will come and go, but the students can gently and continually return to the sacred word.
 - Signify the end of the prayer period with a sound, such as a gong, soft bell, music note, and so on. Encourage the students to keep their eyes closed for a couple of minutes and observe their breathing.
 - End the centering prayer session with a prayer said aloud by the leader. The prayer can be the Lord’s Prayer, Psalm 23, Psalm 42, the Serenity Prayer, or a prayer of your own.
- 3. Encourage the students to use this prayer technique in daily life, in times of stress, and in instances when they want to enter into a close relationship with God.

Conclusion

Centering prayer is a meditation technique that can be used in the classroom. Encourage the students to use this technique in their prayer life, before they go to bed or in the middle of the day, to open their minds and hearts to God through the continuous repetition of a sacred word. The students can also use centering prayer to relax during exams or any stressful time, or to increase their focus on an activity.

