



THE SCHOOL OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

Sitting Meditation:

A simple guide

Meditation in the Christian tradition is a very ancient and very simple form of prayer.

The wisdom and healing processes of meditation are available to everyone.

The practice is not about mastering techniques. It's about relationship. It's the quiet, steady work of simply being here, fully present to the gift of our life. Which means it's also the quiet, steady work of being present-with and present-for those around us.

We learn to be still, to be silent, to rest in God's ever-present peace.

We allow God's spirit to pray in us and guide us to a new way of seeing, a new way of loving: ourselves, each other, God.

All we need to do is begin. And keep beginning. We have already been given everything we need for the journey.

“Behold”, Christ says, “I have left an open door before you, which no one can close.”¹

Practice

Make sure you are sitting comfortably, with your back as straight as you are able, with your body still, relaxed but alert.

Close your eyes lightly and take a few slow, deep breaths. Following the flow of our breath in and out of our body, we return our attention to the present moment.

As you follow the flow of your breathing, allow yourself to let go of any worries about the future, any regrets about the past.

¹ Revelation 3:8.

Choose a prayer word or short phrase to recite in your mind. For example, “Love”, or “Peace”, or “Thy will be done.” And begin to say it silently, interiorly, with the in-breath, and with the outbreath.

We do not reflect on the meaning of the prayer word, but simply use it to help focus our attention and bring us to stillness. We are training the surface mind which, like a puppy, prefers to run about wherever it wants, chewing on whatever it sees.

If you prefer, simply focus on your breath and follow it flowing in and out through your nose. Whatever works for you.

Whenever you notice that your attention has followed a thought and you have been distracted from your practice, do not be discouraged. Just gently return your attention to reciting your prayer word. To notice that you are distracted is awareness, not failure.

It is through the simple means of returning to our practice that we learn to change our relationship with our thoughts, and so with our life.

