

The Prayer of Stillness

The prayer of stillness, or contemplative prayer, has been a recognised way of prayer through all the centuries. The Psalms give some instance of this method of 'waiting on God' – 'Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10). This is the centre of silent prayer and the basis on which ordinary people down the centuries, as well as mystics and contemplatives, have come to know God, rather than just to know about God.

How to start

- Relax, physically and mentally; for just as the sky cannot be reflected in troubled waters, so the presence of God cannot be felt by a restless soul.
- Find a moment when you have at least **ten clear minutes undisturbed**. Turn off your mobile phone.
- Choose a chair which is comfortable but not too comfortable,
- Slow down the rate of breathing and breathe a little more deeply than usual.
- Sit relaxed but alert; close the eyes or fix them on a point in the middle distance.

Having become outwardly and inwardly still and receptive, allow yourself **two minutes** in which to respond to the Lord's invitation 'Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest (Matt 11:28)' Reach inwards, taking to our Lord any pains, fears, suffering, sins or troubles of the day. Having learnt by heart the Bible sentence for the month (which will be on the News Sheet each week) repeat it slowly over and over again in your mind, and without trying to think about the words; just let the words sink in.

This form of prayer is not a striving and an effort, but just being there, quietly attentive. When you are more used to it, the silence can be lengthened or another short period of the day may be devoted to it. Try to recall the sentence momentarily at other times during the day, especially last thing at night before going to sleep, and first thing on waking.

Who is it for?

Silent prayer is suitable for anyone. Try it, and see if you gain any help from it; if not don't worry; there are other ways to pray. But busy people pressed at work, and frantic mothers at home, as well as many others, have found that this way of silent prayer has really changed their lives. It is simple, yet profound; but it does need perseverance. The Prayer of Stillness can also be used in small groups.