

## Silence

by Linda Boyles

Father Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk, teacher and writer on contemplative prayer states, “Silence is God’s first language; everything else is a bad translation.” Incorporating silence into your life may be as simple as turning off the TV and radio. Drive in silence, no radio blaring. Walk or exercise in silence, leave the ipod home!!

Maybe you are ready for more. There are many types of silent prayer. Lectio Divina invites us into a time of silent rest with God. Maybe you will just spend a few minutes in quiet after meditating on God’s word.

I started learning the practice of centering prayer a year ago. My first attempts were sad. In fact, when I met with my spiritual director a month after beginning, I immediately stated, “I don’t know what the point of this is. Why waste 10 minutes of each day in silence? Wouldn’t it be better for me to be helping someone – doing something?”

She smiled. “No,” she answered. “You have the *doing* pretty well mastered. God is calling you into a relationship of *being* with him. Keep practicing the prayer.”

Over the months, I have learned this is not something you evaluate. It is hard for me to be quiet. The stream of thoughts, reflection, ideas, and to do lists are tempting to engage with. I am learning to let them float on by. No goals, no analysis, no expectation of any kind, this prayer is an act of faith. I am consenting and surrendering to God, consenting to His presence and action in me. I am to be present to God just as He is present to me.

In Matthew 6, Jesus says, “But whenever you pray, go into your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.” Jesus is inviting us into a new relationship with our Father, a relationship of intimacy that already exists between you and God. We just need to be open to it.

Father Thomas Keating writes:

What goes on in the inner room? The experience...begins with a commitment to Centering Prayer. It begins with letting go of all our thoughts, our inner dialogue. The ultimate secrecy is no reflection on ourselves. That’s the one that takes the most practice and discipline. It means that we don’t judge the nature of our prayer. We don’t say, for instance, this is better today than yesterday, or how great this peace feels or, if only I could stay here forever. All this is nonsense. Silence. Quiet. Stillness. Openness. Listening. These are all words that suggest themselves to someone who is beginning to taste the reality of God’s presence within. But the taste is far from the full meal.

If you are interested in learning about some of the ways to practice silent prayer, please ask. There are some wonderful resources to help you begin a practice of silence.