

“And suddenly you know: It’s time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings.”

New Life/New Self

Prelude *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* (Taize Community)

Opening Prayer

I. Contemplative Prayer/ Meditation & New Life

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. . .”
(Paul’s letter to the Philippians 2:5)

“Jesus’ command, ‘Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate,’ is a command to participate in the compassion of God himself. He requires us to unmask the illusion of our competitive selfhood, to give up clinging to our imaginary distinctions as sources of identity, and to be taken up into the same intimacy with God which he (Jesus) himself knows. This is the mystery of the Christian life: to receive a new self, a new identity, which depends not on what we can achieve, but on what we are willing to receive. This new self is our participation in the divine life in and through Christ. Jesus wants us to be children of God...to let go of the old life, which is so full of fears and doubts, and to receive the new life...the new identity” . . . based not on what I have achieved, but on the love freely received from God.
Henri J.M. Nouwen

II. The Silent Mindfulness Meditation Practice

“Breath is Spirit. The act of Breathing is Living.”

Author Unknown

“Contemplation is sheer gift. There is nothing we can do to bring forth the flowering, but there are important skills, without which it will be unlikely to flower. --Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land*, p. 54.

Essentials: Stillness
Silence
Attention on the Present
Receptivity (openness)
Being Nonjudgmental
Intention
Patience
Letting Go
Anchor Word, Phrase, Breath, Jesus Prayer

Obstacles:
Resistance – ‘I can’t do it!’
Distractions/Obsessions
Movies in the Mind
Belief that God is a distant OBJECT

“Our culture for the most part trains us to keep our attention riveted to this surface noise, which in turn maintains the illusion of God as a distant object for which we must seek as for something we are convinced we lack . . . (but) St. Augustine reminds us that God is already ‘closer to me than I am to myself.’” M. Laird, *A Sunlit Absence*, p. 3.

III. Prayer of Loving-Kindness

This spiritual practice of expressing “compassion” is found in both Christianity and Buddhism.

“Contemplation is looking at something until it becomes beautiful. . . When you stop needing the trees to be trimmed. When you can be happy with them as they are, you’re in the early stages of contemplation . . . St. Francis said, ‘Everything is to be adored.’” Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward* (2024, rev.).



Stumpy from the *Washington Post*

Contemplative Prayer
Catonsville Presbyterian Church
France Room, April 1, 2024



“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.” Hilary Cooper