

Centering Prayer for week of Jan. 10 and Jan. 17

with Rod McAulay

Instructions:

Find a quiet space where you can comfortably sit upright for at least 20 minutes. Turn off phones and other distractions. Set your timer. Close your eyes. Listen to your breath. You can select a sacred word (peace, maranatha, be still) to say to yourself with each breath. Quiet your brain. If thoughts push in, let them drift away like a leaf on a stream and return to your sacred word. Rest in the presence of your creator.

For week of January 10, 2021

It seems appropriate to begin the new year with some basics. The church lectionary always begins with a reflection on baptism. The Feast of the Baptism of our Lord always is the first Sunday after Christmastide. Below I have chosen some thoughts of the Franciscan monk, Richard Rohr that are basic and radical.

From **Everything Belongs, the gift of Centering Prayer**, by Richard Rohr, p. 78

Thinking has taken over the West. I blame it all on Rene Descartes. His famous phrase is "I think, therefore I am." *Cogito, ergo sum*. We called this insight, strangely, the beginning of the Enlightenment. Instead it was a moving into the mind and identifying with our finite, limited ability to conceptualize things in our isolated brain. What arrogance. . . . The private self is clearly an illusion largely created by thinking. My life is not about me. I am about *life!* That's why the Bible is a social history. We're part of a much larger mystery. Don't take this private thing so seriously. The primary philosophical and spiritual problem in the West is the lie of individualism. Individualism makes church almost impossible. It makes community almost impossible. It makes compassion almost impossible. . . . I need to recognize that I'm in a river that is bigger than I am. The foundation and the flow of that river is love. Life is not about me; it is about God and God is about love.

For the week beginning January 17, 2021

Even while we "shelter in place" we are subject to an onslaught of distressing information of riots and pandemics and death. It is difficult to find peace, to quiet our minds and focus our hearts. I am a map lover. I can get totally absorbed by a map. So, the poem I chose for this week caught my eye and then seemed very appropriate as a guide to centering and peace.

From **Circle of Grace**, by Jan Richardson, p. 77

The Map You Make Yourself

You have looked at so many doors with longing, wondering if your life lay on the other side.

For today, choose the door that opens to the inside.

Travel the most ancient way of all: the path that leads you to the center of your life.

No map but the one you make yourself.

No provision but what you already carry and the grace that comes to those who walk the pilgrim's way.

Speak this blessing as you set out and watch how your rhythm slows, the cadence of the road drawing you into the pace that is your own.

Eat when hungry. Rest when tired. Listen to your dreaming. Welcome detours as doors deeper in.

Pray for protection. Ask for guidance. Offer gladness for the gifts that come, and then let them go.

Do not expect to return by the same road. Home is always by another way and you will know it not by the light that waits for you

but by the star that blazes inside you, telling you where you are is holy and you are welcome here.