

Samadhi Meditation #2: Centering Prayer
Summary of Tuesday Dec. 13th Meditation
By Diane Weiner

We began the session with the reminder to question our own thinking. Could it be that we have only been perceiving one version of reality, and that being a limited perspective? If so, it may be beneficial to identify ourselves with the consciousness above our thoughts. As the Buddhists say, “We are not our thoughts.”

Today we practiced a form of meditation in which the only object is to remain in the center, or as I like to think of it, in square one. We catch ourselves at the beginning of thinking and stop ourselves from proceeding with the process. Some people find it helpful to say a word, like “Love” or “Peace”, to remind themselves not to allow the thinking mind to engage. It takes practice and concentration.

I find it helps to think of the cherubim whose only job is to face God, or the Holy of Holies, and glorify God all day, not to interacting with life at all. The goal of this type of meditation has the opposite effect of engaging in life or trying to create a better world. Why do it? It is like a pianist who has only been playing the high notes on the piano (comparable to trying to make a beautiful world). In this meditation it is like we taped the high notes so we could only play the low notes (comparable to being reabsorbed beyond life). Ultimately we want to be able to play all the notes of the piano. We want to be able to experience life and also what is beyond life, even in the midst of life. This will widen our perspective, our energy, and our abilities to affect life.

Members of the group gave advice about ways they have been able to concentrate during meditation, including mentally saying, “Neti, neti,” which means “not this” in Hindi, whenever their mind began thinking again during meditation.

Other ideas included allowing ourselves to feel the natural pull we have for freedom, feeling a lifting upward above the world, or flying toward the horizon above our thoughts.

(For more information about Centering Prayer refer to the work of Father Thomas Keating.)