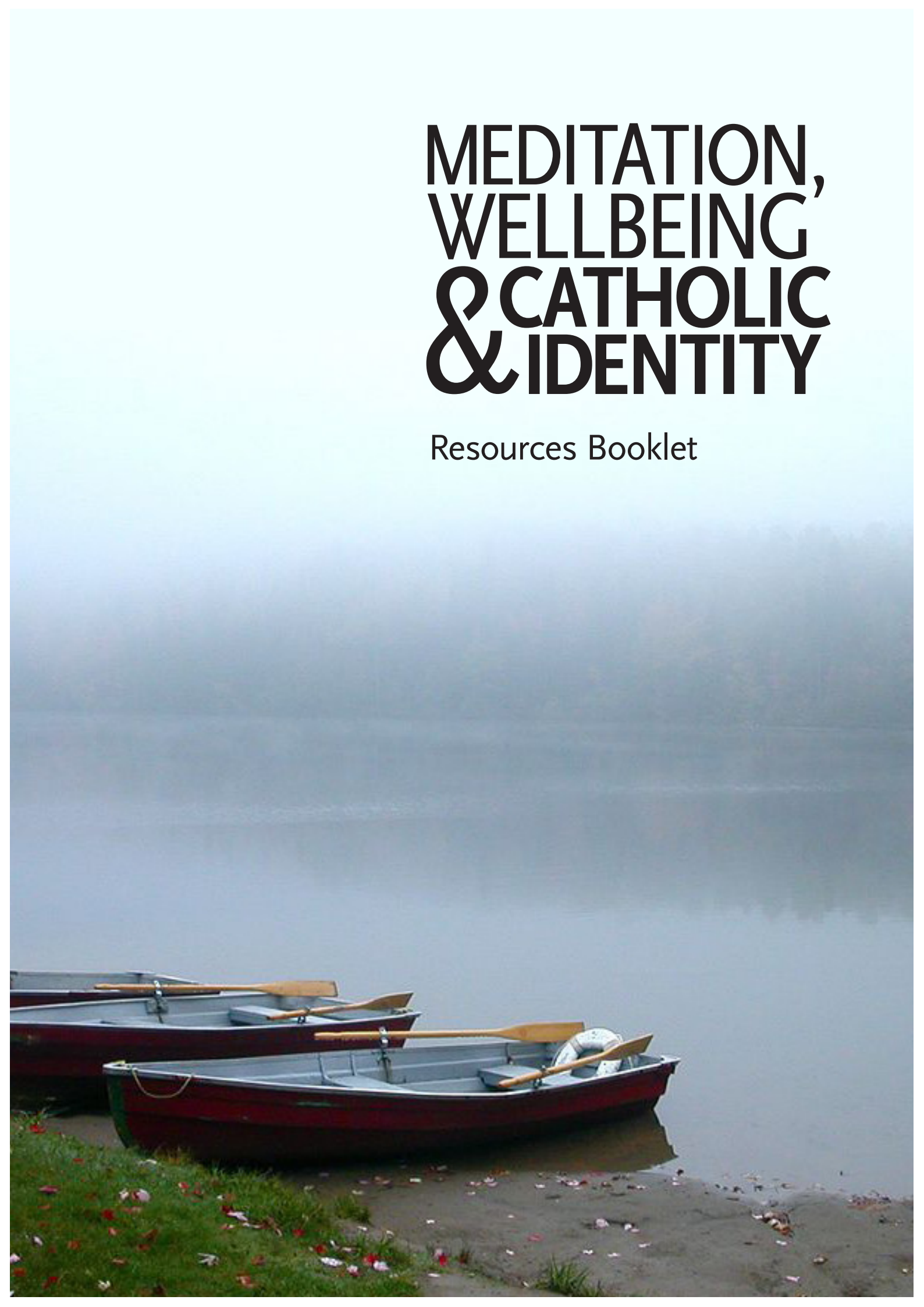


# MEDITATION, WELLBEING, & CATHOLIC & IDENTITY

Resources Booklet



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## THE LANGUAGE OF MEDITATION

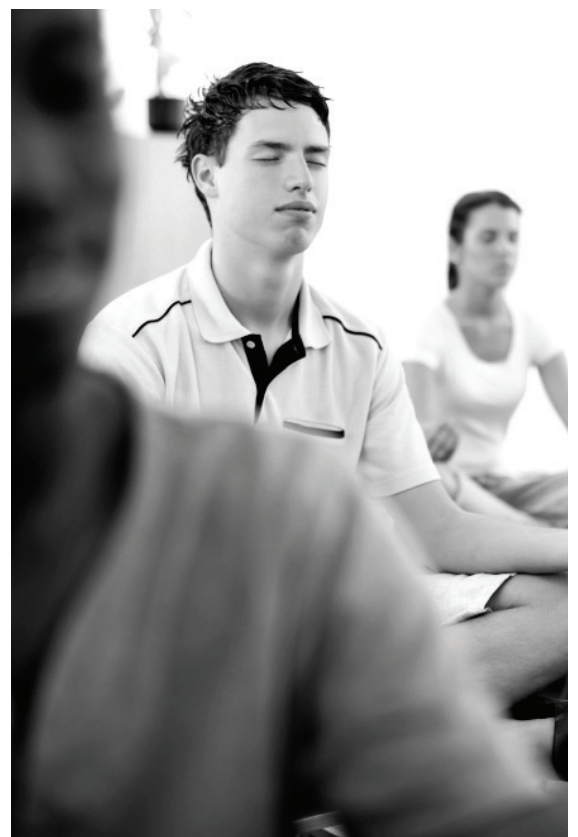
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### **GUIDED/REFLECTIVE MEDITATION:**

Using the imagination; reflection; thinking deeply; relaxation/movement of the body

### **SILENT MEDITATION:**

Being present in silence, simplicity and stillness through the practice of attentiveness with a non-judgemental attitude.



## SOME QUOTES RELATING TO MEDITATION

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### MINDFULNESS:

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally to things as they are. —JON KABAT-ZINN

### IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION:

Prayer is the laying aside of thoughts. —EVAGRIUS PONTICUS, 399 CE

We pray in our inner room whenever we withdraw our hearts completely from the tumult and the noise of our thoughts and our worries, and when secretly and intimately we offer our prayers...

by repeating a single verse.

—CONFERENCES OF JOHN CASSIAN, 420 CE

Use this little word and pray not in many words but in a little word of one syllable. Fix this word fast to your heart so that it is always there come what may. With this word, you will leave all thoughts.

—THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING, 14TH CENTURY

### CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES:

Silence is not an absence of sound but is the object of a positive sensation, more positive than that of sound. —SIMONE WEIL

It starts not from thinking and self-awareness but from being...

—THOMAS MERTON

Silence is letting what there is, be what it is, and in that sense is profoundly to do with God. When we experience moments where there is nothing we can say or do that would not intrude on the integrity and beauty of what is before us, that is a silence that takes us into God.

—ROWAN WILLIAMS

Each person as he or she is at rest is worthwhile – they don't become worthwhile by all they do when not at rest. It's from that point that God will move in them, create afresh, change. —ROWAN WILLIAMS

Meditation is the discovery of our own inner freedom.

—KALLISTOS WARE

Meditation is to allow God's mysterious and silent presence within us to become more and more not only a reality, but the reality in our lives; to let it become that reality which gives meaning, shape and purpose to everything we do, to everything we are. —JOHN MAIN

What we take in by contemplation we must pour out in love.

—MEISTER ECKHART

## MEDITATION PRACTICE: GENERAL

### PRACTICE: BEING PRESENT IN SILENCE

Be comfortable in posture: *sitting upright and closing eyes lightly.*

Choose a practice and *continue* it throughout the meditation.

- Noticing your breath lightly, **and/or**
- Repeating a word or phrase silently with no rush or force.

#### During the Practice:

- Whenever you notice a *movement away* from a sense of *being present\**, (through excessive *thinking\** or drowsiness), return to your practice with no rush or force. *This can seem like beginning over and over again.*
- A stronger sense of awareness/ presence/silence may develop, and there *may be* no need to continue repeating the practice. If you notice that you are reflecting on the experience – *return* to the practice.

\* **Being Present:** an interplay of attentiveness and open receptivity. It is about willingness rather than wilfulness.

\* **Thoughts:** may include feelings, thinking, images, memories, sensory impressions

### POSSIBLE WORDS OR PHRASES:

Peace  
Calm  
Centre  
Silence  
Awareness  
Stillness  
Simplicity  
Presence  
Listen  
Be  
Being  
Let it be  
Be still  
Yes

### CHRISTIAN MANTRAS: (OR A WORD OR PHRASE OF YOUR CHOICE)

Faith  
Jesus  
Mercy  
Peace  
Peace be with you  
Be Still and Know that I am  
God  
Maranatha  
Lord Jesus have mercy on me  
Amen

## MEDITATION FOR STUDENTS: PRACTICE AND PREPARATION

### MEDITATION PRACTICE FOR STUDENTS

*Non-judgmental, moment-to-moment  
awareness of the moment*

#### Prepare for Practice:

- *Sit upright and comfortably, close your eyes lightly*

Choose a Practice and *continue* that practice throughout the meditation:

- Awareness of your breath, **OR**
- Repeating a word or phrase

*Repeat your practice silently and with no rush or force; to be centred; or as prayer*

#### During the Practice:

- Whenever you notice your thoughts\* return to the word and/or breath again
- Accept your thoughts as they are - *let them go like clouds in the sky drifting past*

\*Thoughts may include thinking, feelings, images, memories.



### PREPARING FOR MEDITATION

#### Breathing:

1. Sit comfortably (on a chair or the floor) and close your eyes lightly. *Pause.*
2. Listen to the sounds outside the room. *Pause for 15 seconds.*
3. Listen to the sounds inside the room. *Pause for 15 seconds.*
4. Become aware of your breathing. *Pause for 15 seconds.*
5. Now follow your breath as it comes in and goes out, listen to it.
6. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your chest as you breathe. *Pause for 30 seconds.*

#### Relaxation:

1. Sit comfortably (on a chair or the floor) and close your eyes lightly. *Pause.*
2. Beginning with your feet, slowly/gradually move through each section of the body step by step – tensing and relaxing as you go, e.g. ‘Be aware of your feet on the floor, tense/tighten them and hold (pause), now let them relax’. *Pause.*
3. Be particularly aware of the spine, shoulders, neck, and face.

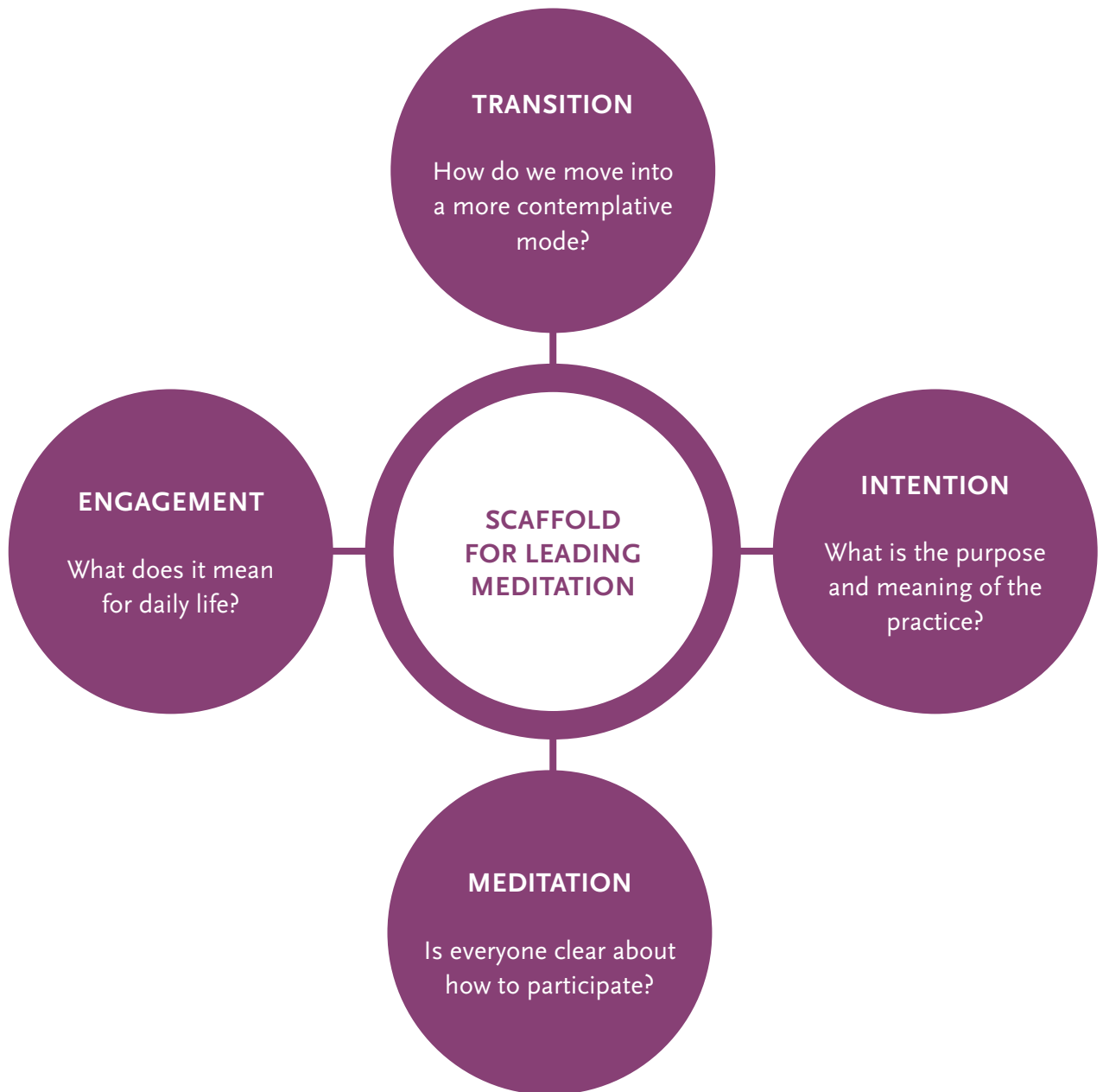
#### Including students who find silence and stillness challenging:

- Spending time choosing the word or phrase
- Gazing at the candle flame, or looking down at hands
- Awareness of breathing
- Use of beads/stress balls
- Combining with other forms of prayer/meditation
- Use of a labyrinth

[www.lessons4living.com/Finger%20Labyrinth.PDF](http://www.lessons4living.com/Finger%20Labyrinth.PDF)

## LEADING MEDITATION: TIME PROCESS

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It is best to commit to practicing consistently (at least once per week) for a short amount of time (a few minutes) rather than occasionally for a longer time.

## 1. **Transition:**

Allow time for students to move from the busyness of their daily activities into a more contemplative space. The following activities may be helpful for this:

- Set the environment – you may wish to dim the lights, set a prayer focus, light a candle, use music.
- A short relaxation exercise.
- A time to focus on posture, encouraging students to sit upright and relaxed.

## 2. **Intention:**

Allow time to be mindful of intention. Contemplative prayer is an expression of our faith in, and desire for, union with God. The word or breath (in the context of prayer) is an expression of our intention, of our faith in God's presence. The following activities may be helpful for this:

- Suggesting that meditation provides an opportunity: to be silent and make space; and to be present silently with God who is present with us.
- Suggesting that meditation provides a time to centre and calm ourselves which is helpful for stressful times e.g. study, exams, relationships, preparing to play sport etc.
- Exploring Scripture and meditation.

## 3. **Meditation:**

Allow time for silence and stillness. The following activities may be helpful for this:

- Giving clear and simple instructions on the method of meditation, the amount of time for the meditation [Junior (F-4): 3-5 minutes, Middle (5-9): 5-10 minutes, Senior (10-12): up to 15 minutes] - use a bell to measure this
- Suggesting ways to include students who find silence and stillness challenging e.g. gazing at the candle flame, awareness of breathing, use of beads or labyrinth, combining with other forms of prayer/meditation
- Conclude the silence with a short prayer: *The Our Father* or *Glory Be*.

## 4. **Engagement:**

Allow time to engage with the world. The following activities may be helpful for this:

- Encouraging expression through journaling, art - how do you move back into daily life with a deeper awareness of the sacred?
- Emphasising that meditation leads to compassion and other fruits and providing time for students to reflect on how this relates to their own lives.



**SUGGESTED  
SCRIPTURE  
PASSAGES**

The Lost Sheep: Lk 15:3–6  
 The Good Shepherd: Jn 10:11–15  
 Jesus at Prayer: Mk 1:35, Lk 5: 16, Lk 6:12  
 Prayer: Mt 6:6-7, Lk 11:5–13  
 Do Not Worry: Mt 6:25-34  
 Jesus Stills a Storm: Mk 4:35–41  
 Three Parables: Mt 13: 44-50  
 Parable of Growing Seed & Mustard Seed: Mk 4:26–32  
 Jesus Blesses Little Children: Mk 10:13–16  
 Jesus Thanks his Father: Mt 11:25–30  
 The Man with a Withered Hand: Mt 3:1–6  
 Feeding the 5000: Mt 14:13–21

## SCAFFOLDING FOR SILENT MEDITATION

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**Timing:**

- Working together to build up the time of silence gradually

**Posture:**

- Developing the skills of being both “upright” (firm) and “comfortable” (relaxed) to enable stillness.
- Encourage closing the eyes, or looking down at the palm of the hands/gazing at a candle

**Breath:**

- Practice the experience of breathing – ‘loud and soft’
- Hold the stomach as it moves in and out
- Have different points of focus for the breath – e.g. at the nostrils or at the stomach
- Lie down and balance a paper boat on the stomach as it rises and falls with the waves of the breath

**Word:**

- Saying the word without rush or force – it is ok to have other thoughts going on – just stay with the word/breath as well.
- Spending reflection time choosing a word or phrase – and drawing/ painting the word and/or including the students’ words/phrases as part of the prayer table

**Distractions**

- Working together to continue developing ways to deal with distractions – having suggestions around the room (e.g. “I let distractions go out the window”, “I focus on my body on the chair/floor”)
- Combining with other forms of prayer/ meditation
- Use of beads/stress ball or the labyrinth – these are to be used with caution with the aim of letting them go over time

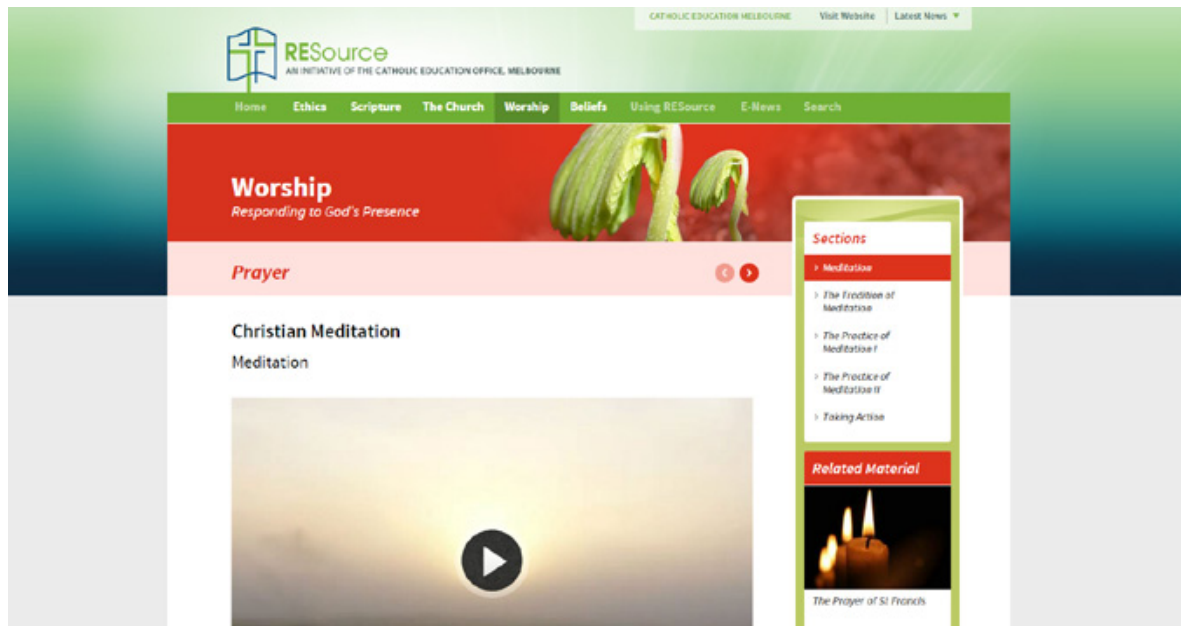




## MEDITATION IN THE WHOLE SCHOOL

- Develop a consistent practice/culture of meditation across the school – **keep it simple with clear messages** – short and consistent is better than long and occasional
- It is a journey that takes time – **work with your entire community** – considering different ways of developing meditation in your context
- Support each other – **share learning and resources**
- Include the theory and practice of meditation
- Connect meditation to the curriculum
- Meditation also forms part of the whole Catholic School experience
- **Use the students as leaders**

## RESOURCES



### DVD:

- *Time for the Sacred: Meditating in the Christian Tradition.* (CEOM DVD, 2009)

### Websites:

- [www.resourcemelb.catholic.edu.au](http://www.resourcemelb.catholic.edu.au)  
*RESource – in the Worship section – “Christian Meditation”*
- [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org)  
*Centering Prayer resources*
- [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org)  
*Christian Mediation resources*
- [www.cominghome.org.au](http://www.cominghome.org.au)  
*Christian meditation for children and young people*
- [www.mindfuleducation.org](http://www.mindfuleducation.org)  
*Mindfulness in education*

### ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report: [www.asg.com.au/social/emotional](http://www.asg.com.au/social/emotional) (81 schools , 4 years, 11,526 students across all levels)

- 50% reported not learning how to cope with stress
- 40% reported difficulty calming down
- 40% said they worry too much
- 30% said they are very nervous
- 20% at some point felt very hopeless and depressed for a week and had stopped regular activities

### Books:

- *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Thomas Keating – Centering Prayer
- *Word Into Silence* by John Main – Christian Meditation
- *Christian Meditation: Your Daily Practice* by Laurence Freeman – a great place to begin
- *Mindfulness for Life* by Stephen McKenzie and Craig Hassed
- *Hurry Up and Meditate* by David Michie



## READING 1: THE CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITION

Extracts from *Intimacy with God*  
by Thomas Keating

One of the enduring legacies of the Second Vatican Council was its call to return to the gospels and to biblical theology as the primary sources of Catholic spirituality. The Word of God is the insertion of God into the human family and the insertion of the human family into God in the person of Jesus Christ. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are together, in one nature, both the Ultimate Mystery and the Ultimate Reality. Their interior relationship of total giving and receiving is the divine life that Christ was sent to share with us.

The Fathers of the Church in their homilies frequently explained the Scriptures from a contemplative perspective, or, as it was called in those days, “in the spiritual sense.” The spiritual sense was understood to contain much more than an allegorical interpretation of a particular text. It was rather an insight into the inherent nature

of the divinely inspired texts that revealed levels of meaning that the Spirit, by strengthening one’s faith through the gifts of wisdom and understanding, enabled the Christian gradually to perceive. The manifold gifts of the Spirit were believed to come into full exercise through the regular practice of prayer and the growth of faith into contemplation with its progressive stages of development. ...

St Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century ... described contemplation as “the knowledge of God that is impregnated with love.” For Gregory, contemplation was both the fruit of reflecting on the word of God in Scripture and a precious gift of God. He called it “resting in God.” In this “resting” the mind and heart are not so much seeking God as beginning to experience, “to taste,” what they have been seeking. This state is not the suspension of all activity, but the reduction of many acts and reflections to a single act or thought to sustain one’s consent to God’s presence and action at the depths of one’s being during the time of prayer.

The understanding of contemplation as the knowledge of God based on the intimate experience of God's presence remained throughout the Middle Ages. Ascetical disciplines (such as fasting, vigils, prolonged solitude, periods of silence, ascetical obedience, simplicity of lifestyle) and more spiritual disciplines (such as discursive meditation, affective prayer, veneration of icons, psalmody, chanting, the rosary) always included contemplation as part of their Christ-centred goal.

Lectio Divina is the most traditional way of cultivating contemplative prayer. A mainstay of Christian monastic practice from the earliest days, it consists in listening to the texts of the Bible as if one were in conversation with God and God were suggesting the topics for discussion. Those who follow the method of Lectio Divina are cultivating the capacity to listen to the word of God at ever deepening levels of attention. Spontaneous prayer is the normal response to their growing relationship with Christ, and the gift of contemplation is God's normal response to them.

The reflective part, the pondering on the words of the sacred text in Lectio Divina, is called *meditation*, discursive meditation. The spontaneous movement of the will in response to these reflections is called *oratio*, affective prayer. As these reflections and particular acts of will simplify, one tends to resting in God or *contemplation*.

These three acts – discursive meditation, affective prayer, and contemplation – might all take place during the same period of prayer. They are interwoven. One may listen to the Lord as if sharing a privileged interview and respond with one's reflections, with acts of will, or with silence – with the rapt attention of contemplation.

The practice of contemplative prayer is not an effort to make the mind a blank but to move beyond discursive thinking and affective prayer to the level of communing with God, which is a more intimate kind of exchange.

In human relationships, as mutual love deepens, there comes a time when the two friends convey their sentiments without words. They can sit in silence sharing an experience or simply enjoying each other's presence without saying anything. Holding hands or a single word from time to time can maintain this deep communication.

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## READING 2: WHAT IS PRAYER & HOW DO WE PRAY?

Extract from *Christian Meditation: Your Daily Practice* by Laurence Freeman

A very old definition of prayer described it as “the raising of the heart and mind to God.” What is the “mind, “what is the “heart”? The mind is what thinks - it questions, plans, worries, fantasizes. The heart is what knows – it loves. The mind is the organ of knowledge, the heart...the organ of love. Mental consciousness must eventually give way and open up to the fuller way of knowing which is heart consciousness. Love is complete knowledge.

Most of our training in prayer, however, is limited to the mind. We were taught as children to say our prayers, to ask God for what we or others need. But this is only half of the mystery of prayer. The other half is the prayer of the heart where we are not thinking of God or talking to him or asking for anything. We are simply being with God who is in us in the Holy Spirit whom Jesus has given us. The Holy Spirit is the love, the relationship of love that flows between Father and Son. It is this Spirit Jesus has breathed into every human heart. Meditation, then, is the prayer of the heart uniting us with the human consciousness of Jesus in the Spirit.

We do not even know how to pray but the Spirit himself prays within Us.  
(Romans 8:26)

For mental prayer - praying in words or using thoughts about God - we can make rules. There are many “methods of mental prayer,” but for the prayer of the heart there

is no technique, no rules: “Where the Spirit is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

The Holy Spirit in the modern Church, especially since the Vatican Council in the early 1960’s, has been teaching us to recover this other dimension of our prayer... This means that we must move beyond the level of mental prayer: talking to God, thinking about God, asking God for our needs. We must go to the depths, to where the spirit of Jesus himself is praying in our hearts, in the deep silence of his union with our Father in the Holy Spirit.

Contemplative prayer is not the privilege of monks and nuns or special mystical types. It is a dimension of prayer to which we are called. It is not about extraordinary experiences or altered states of consciousness. It is what Thomas Aquinas called the “simple enjoyment of the truth.” William Blake spoke of the need to “cleanse the doors of perception” so that we can see everything as it truly is: infinite. This is all about the contemplative consciousness as lived in ordinary life. Meditation leads us to this and it is part of the whole mystery of prayer in the life of any person who is seeking fullness of being.

How do we pray?

St. Paul said that we do not know how to pray, but the Spirit prays within us (Romans 8:26). This is the key to understanding the real meaning of Christian prayer. It suggests that we learn to pray not by trying to pray but by giving up, or letting go, of our trying. And instead, learning to be. This opens access to the deeper prayer of the heart where we can find the “love of God flooding our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us” (Romans 6:5). This is pure experience, beyond thought, dogma and imagination. The important



question is how can we open our whole self to this pure experience of love' in our "inmost being"? First, let's look at the three essential elements of contemplation again. These answer the question "how" do we pray - we pray by becoming silent, still and simple.

### 1. Silence:

We need silence for our psychological health as well as for our spiritual growth. With television, personal stereos and the traffic noise in modern cities, silence is becoming more and more difficult to experience. But the real silence is interior. In fact, even if we are in a very noisy place, we can be silent if we are concentrated, which means at one with our own centre. We learn to be silence by paying attention. Attention brings the centre of our being to full consciousness. It brings us from the past and the future into the present which is gentle and restful. There are 110 reasons why we cannot be silent in a busy street, in a traffic jam, or waiting in a supermarket line. Learning to be silent at the times of meditation teaches us to "pray" at all times. It teaches us also to use every delay or frustration in daily life as an opportunity, indeed a gift, to go deeper, to learn to listen, to wait in our new-found silence. Silence is truthful. It is healing. It pacifies our inner turmoil. It is the cure for destructive anger, anxiety and bitterness. In silence we learn the universal language of the Spirit. God speaks the creative word out of a boundless silence which pervades all we think and do. Silence in prayer, as between two people, is a sign of trust and acceptance. Without the capacity to be silent, we are unable to listen to another person. In its essence, silence is nothing less than worship in spirit and truth. So, it is not just the absence of noise. Silence is a whole attitude of being, of relating, and an

openness to the mutual knowing and inter-being which is love.

### 2. Stillness:

One of the psalms says "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Stillness does not mean a state of inertia or death. To know God is to be fully alive. Stillness is the balance of all the many forces and energies that make up a person - physical, mental and spiritual. As with silence, stillness has both an exterior and an interior dimension. Stillness has nothing to do with the holding in, the blocking or the repression of movement or action. It is the fulfilment of all movement and action. In prayer we need to come to physical stillness. This is the first step of the inner journey to God at the centre of our being. Physical stillness helps us to realize that our bodies are sacred - "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). In fact, simply learning to sit still is a great step forward on any spiritual path. For many it is the first lesson in going beyond desire - the urge to scratch or fidget. Our physical restlessness reflects not only bodily stress and tension, but also mental anxiety and distractedness. Physical stillness has a direct effect upon the silence of our mind, and so helps immensely to bring body mind and spirit into harmony. But the next dimension of stillness is interior. To come to a stillness of mind is the great challenge of prayer. How can we deal with the constant activity of the mind?

### 3. Simplicity

Christian prayer is awakening to the reality that we are at home now in the kingdom of God. Jesus told us that the kingdom of God is within us and also that we must become like children, if we are to enter this kingdom. "The kingdom is not a place but

an experience” (John Main). Being simple is not easy. We are constantly analysing ourselves, our feelings, our motives - or other people’s - and our constant self-consciousness makes us very complex and confused. But God is simple - love is simple. Meditation is simple. Being simple means being ourselves. It means passing beyond self-consciousness, self-analysis and self-rejection. Meditation is a universal spiritual practice which guides us into this state of prayer, into the prayer of Christ. It brings us to silence, stillness and simplicity by a means that is itself silent, still and simple.

The means is the repetition of a single sacred word faithfully and lovingly during the time of meditation. Today we call the sacred word a mantra. This is a very ancient Christian way of prayer which has been recovered for modern Christians by the Benedictine monk John Main (1926-1982). John Main recovered this way of bringing the mind to rest in the heart through the teaching of the first Christian monks, the Desert Fathers, especially John Cassian (4th century A.D.) It is in the same tradition as the Cloud of Unknowing written in England in the 14th century

John Main taught that to meditate you:

- i. sit still with your back straight
- ii. close your eyes
- iii. repeat your mantra interiorly, and continuously.

Choose a quiet time and place every morning and evening and meditate for about 20-30 minutes each time. An ideal mantra is the ancient Aramaic phrase maranatha. Say it as four syllables of equal length, clearly and continuously: MA-RA-NA-THA. Say it without haste and without expecting anything to happen. Listen to the mantra with your whole being. Gently

return to it whenever you get distracted. Be simple. Be faithful.

Aramaic is the language Jesus spoke, the same language as the word “abba,” which he constantly used in referring to God. Maranatha is the oldest Christian prayer. It means “Come Lord, “or “The Lord comes.” St. Paul ends the First Letter to the Corinthians, and St. John, the Book of Revelation, with this phrase which expresses the deep and simple faith of the early church. The meaning and sound of the word are both important. But as you say the word, do not think about the meaning. The mantra leads us deeper than thought, to pure being. It leads us by faith. We say the mantra in faith and love. Listening to the mantra as we say it is the ever-deepening work of a journey of faith.

Four rules help you to persevere:

- don’t have any demands or expectations
- don’t evaluate your meditation
- integrate it into your daily life, with morning and evening practice
- live its consequence, day by day.

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# School of Prayer

The School of Prayer is a program of the Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation. It offers formation in the Catholic tradition of prayer, with a special focus on Lectio Divina and meditation. The School supports the formation of prayer leaders in parish, educational and healthcare settings, offering input and resources that promote prayer suited to contemporary needs. The work of the School of Prayer is driven by the Forum, whose members represent parishes, schools, hospitals, and spirituality centres around Melbourne.

For information on the School of Prayer, visit [www.cam.org.au/evangelisation](http://www.cam.org.au/evangelisation) or contact the Archbishop's Office for Evangelisation on 9926 5761.

