



The Practice of Welcoming Prayer

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Welcoming prayer is a contemplative practice developed by Mary Mrozowski who based this practice on the teachings of Thomas Keating. This is about committing to radical acts of hospitality by welcoming both the stranger within and without. It is about compassion and making space for unclaimed parts of ourselves. When we develop compassion for unclaimed parts of ourselves we develop the ability to accept those places in others.

Welcoming prayer helps us live with the truth of this moment and accept whatever is happening right now while at the same time welcoming the gift of transforming grace to flow through us.

This meditation has three movements

- 1. Focus and sinking in**
- 2. Welcome**
- 3. Letting go**

Focus and sinking in

Allow some time to focus on your body. Bring your awareness to your breath and just notice what you are feeling in this present moment. Notice any physical pain as well as bring your attention to your emotions. Are you feeling sad, anxious, tired, confused. Notice where this emotion resides in your body. Just notice your physical experience and your emotional experience and where you are feeling this in your body.

This is the first step. To become aware. Just stay present and don't try to change anything. Don't try to justify your feelings or try to explain them away. Just sit with them and stay present. Become the observer.

Welcome

The second movement is to welcome this emotion or feeling. Name your experience and welcome it in. Practice inner hospitality and begin to say very gently

to it "Welcome pain or welcome sadness or welcome anxiety, welcome...."

The goal is not to get rid of the experience but to remain aware and fully present to yourself at this moment. Often we let the emotion or feeling overwhelm us and we try to move further away from being present to ourselves and to this moment in time.

So rather than running away - we embrace the emotion or feeling - we open ourselves to hear the wisdom it might have to offer and welcome it to reveal what it is trying to say to us. We gradually become aware that this experience does not define the whole of us. We are not made up entirely of our grief nor are we entirely defined by our joy.

Welcoming is not about accepting illness or pain inflicted by another. It is not about condoning what caused the emotional or physical pain. We are surrendering to an inner attitude. It is only by inviting these feelings and emotions in that we are no longer controlled by them. Take time in each of the stages and don't rush through them.

Letting go

The third movement is letting go. When you have taken time in the first two stages and feel your resistance becoming welcoming it is time to move to the letting go stage. To let go you can say something like "I let go of my sadness and give it over to God." Allow divine compassion to flow through you. If you find resistance to letting go - be compassionate with yourself and bring acceptance towards where you are right now.