

Is There a Better Way to Pray?

The difference between traditional prayer, Centering Prayer, and Integral Prayer



Integral Prayer - part 1 - by Paul Smith

Prayer may be one of the oldest and longstanding traditions in all of humanity. Long before written history, humans were praying to the divine for help, guidance, and a change in the present circumstances in their lives.

But what does prayer look like for Christians today? As our views of God evolve, do we still feel comfortable asking for help and talking to God? Some do, some don't. Some are confused or maybe even embarrassed about what they find themselves uttering below their breath in prayer—or maybe they've given all that up as childish or mythical.

Is there more? Is there a better way to pray?

Let's look at a few common forms of prayer for Christians today to set the stage for how our understanding and practice of prayer might continue to evolve.

TRADITIONAL PRAYER IS TALKING TO GOD

Interestingly, Jesus was for talking to God — and also against it. It



just depended on how you went about it. Praying with words is based on the way Jesus prayed at times and told us that we should pray that way, too. Traditional verbal praying today is often centered on making requests to God. It comes in all kinds of forms.

In a church, it can sound like the emotion-filled prayer of an African American pastor, the liturgy of a Greek Orthodox congregation, a priest officiating at the Roman Catholic Mass, or any other up-front, “performative” prayers. At home, it may be a woman praying the Rosary or a man in his personal devotions. Perhaps it is soldiers praying before they go on a dangerous mission. For many, it began in childhood at bedtime prayers.

Most people learn verbal praying by hearing church leaders in worship services or recited prayers from their traditions such as the, or the prayers said in the Mass. Its various forms have been meaningful to many people down through the centuries. However, it has its limitations.



TALKING TO GOD HAS ITS LIMITATIONS

The lovely man I am honored to call my friend, Richard Rohr, has half of million people around the world who read and follow his Christ-centered teachings. Rather than me critiquing traditional prayer, I’m going to take the easy way out and let him do it in his insightful way. Here is his critique of traditional prayer:

“Jesus warns us about this verbal prayer when he says, “Why do you babble on like the pagans do? God already knows what you need” (Matthew 6:7).

“He also warns us against telling God what God already knows better than we do, (6:9), and I must say many times the formal prayers of the faithful at a Catholic Mass sound more like announcements than actual prayer, especially given the fact that they are done in the third person and not addressed actively as if God is in the room, which would lead us to pray in the second person. (You have to go to Pentecostal or black churches to hear that!)

And in that same Gospel, Jesus even warns us against too much public prayer, (6:5), since it has too many social payoffs. We must be honest and admit that we have not followed Jesus’s basic advice on prayer, and, in fact, often directly disobeyed it.”

CENTERING PRAYER IS NOT TALKING TO GOD

The beauty of Centering Prayer is that you don’t have to talk—or even think at all. Actually, that’s the point! You just sit quietly in the presence of God. What a relief not to have to think! We can literally do what the psalmist recommends “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10).

Father Keating, the spiritual giant who teaches this method, said, “The centering-prayer method is simple: Find a quiet place to pray alone. Sit in silence with the intention of being in God’s presence. When you become



aware of any thoughts or feelings, turn away from them and focus on a “sacred word” of your choosing. Let go of every kind of thought during prayer, even the most devout thoughts.” He famously said, “If Mary appears to you, tell her you are busy.”

Centering Prayer’s popularity can partly be seen as a reaction against the lack of spiritual depth of much traditional prayer. Centering Prayer has the potential to move people into deeper states of consciousness, usually after much hard work and many years of practice.

Another reason for the popularity of Centering Prayer may be that it is often the only acceptable form of Christian prayer among postmoderns.

As the postmodern cartoon says, “Pardon me. I’m talking to Jesus, and it’s embarrassing.”

Postmoderns tend to reject all forms of second-person prayer which directly address God, Jesus, and other spiritual beings in reaction against evangelicalism and other traditional forms of Christianity. So a postmodern can “pray” and by-pass the embarrassing “talking to Jesus” thing.

Interestingly, the only form of prayer Father Keating taught publicly was Centering Prayer. Richard Rohr teaches what he calls contemplation, which is more varied than Centering Prayer, but does not usually address personal relationships with spiritual beings. However, they both personally practice intimate conversations with Jesus, which is a form of enlightened traditional prayer. So they both integrate traditional and Centering Prayer at the personal level!



NOT TALKING TO GOD HAS ITS LIMITATIONS



Talking to God is head-centered prayer. However, so is not talking to God. Centering Prayer seeks to use the mind to clear the mind. That can be like asking the fox to guard the chicken coop. It takes a pretty foxy person to pull it off.

Centering Prayer’s roots in patriarchal Christian tradition contribute elements that are spiritually limiting. I hesitate to point this out because Centering Prayer has been so helpful to many people, but I do so because of what is possible beyond these limitations.

Let me begin by affirming that the beauty and transforming power of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church Mass has been meaningful to many people. At the same time, every branch of Christianity has its challenges. Integral transcends the worst and includes the best. No matter how much these churches mean to us, I am going to point out a part that most of us probably want to transcend. This is their intentional investment in the patriarchal mindset, which shows up in their leadership and language.

Almost all forms of traditional meditation, Buddhist, Hindu, and Christian—including Centering Prayer—come from the deeply



patriarchal culture of previous eras. Christian versions come from the even more patriarchal culture of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church. And in particular, from the predominately male-only monastery setting where Christian meditative prayer originated. So you have three layers of patriarchal, excessively masculine oriented values which are unbalanced by feminine values. Here are five of these unbalanced values that psychologists point out are seen as abusive in today's culture.

1. The spiritual leadership of both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches is restricted to men, which devalues women and the feminine.
2. The Roman Catholic priesthood and monastic culture prohibit marriage and have an ascetic tendency to regulate and control the body and especially sexuality. The requirement of chastity rules out marriage and all sexual activity as one "forsakes all carnal knowledge and pleasure."
3. The patriarchal culture seeks to *regulate* and *control* the emotions. Feminine values are more fluid and open to a wide range of emotions. Tony Soprano defined the perfect form of masculinity as the "strong, silent type." Humorist Croft Penz says, "A woman likes a strong, silent man because she thinks he's listening."
4. Men tend to frame love in terms of good behavior. "I love you if you act in acceptable ways." Females tend to see love as unconditional. "I love you, no matter what." Therefore, the God of these groups historically tends to be a harsh, male, macho God. That is patriarchy.
5. Masculine values of independence and separateness dominate the more feminine values of relationality. Centering Prayer settles for praying alone, even in a group.



ALL OF THIS HAS RESULTED IN AT LEAST FIVE LIMITATIONS IN MOST FORMS OF CHRISTIAN MEDITATION AND CENTERING PRAYER IN PARTICULAR:



1. It is mind-focused in a traditional masculine approach. This outweighs other centers of spiritual knowing. According to leading author and teacher, Robert Masters, spiritual by-passing is a very persistent shadow of spirituality. Lopsided development, such as cognitive intelligence, is often far ahead of emotional and moral intelligence and is a form of spiritual

by-passing in religion.

2. It often results in a spirituality that suppresses emotion, denying a vital aspect of humanity an integrated place in spiritual practice.
3. It is detached from the body. Here is the Disembodied Man who can barely feel or see his body.
4. It intentionally rejects a Trinitarian second-person relational connection to God while doing Centering Prayer. If this is one's only or primary form of prayer, it is limited



indeed!

5. It intentionally rejects the presence of others in the collective spiritual energy field. This results in a solitary practice that is individually focused, even in a group that is doing meditative prayer.

Despite these limitations, Centering Prayer has been a blessing and life-changing practice for many Christians. It will continue to be so. But there is also more! Can we balance this by integrating more feminine values like greater relationality, embodiment, and spiritual energy?

INTEGRAL PRAYER KNITS TOGETHER TALKING WITH GOD, NOT TALKING WITH GOD, AND MUCH MORE

The great thing about an integral approach is that it integrates the best of everything, and moves on beyond the worst. So, of course, Integral Prayer integrates talking to God and not talking to God, plus a whole lot more. We aim for an integrated, embodied spiritual practice, with a whole-body mystical awakening meditation and what we're calling, "Integral Prayer." We see this as another step forward in the evolution of our spiritual practice as Christians, in how we practice waking up currently available today.



Integral Knits the Best Together

Can the Trinity Evolve?

The Three Faces of God - The Foundation of Integral Prayer



Christ with Three Faces - Trinity - Netherlandish School 1500 CE

If prayer is communicating and communing with God, we must know who this God is that we are spending time with. Am I praying to a distant cosmic force? A white dove? Do I still talk to Jesus? Do I simply dwell in my own divine being, silently and individually?

Most Christians have been taught a Trinitarian view of God, and the biblical, theological foundation of Integral Prayer is based on the Trinity, but an evolved form. Can the classical Trinity evolve while keeping its foundational truth for Christianity?

Where did we get the idea that God is “Father, Son, and Spirit?”

Let's begin with the origin of the Christian Trinity. Soon after the resurrection, the first friends of Jesus began giving Jesus the same devotion they gave God. They came to believe Jesus so identified with God that he was God in the flesh. This eventually raised questions such as: Are there two Gods? Are Jesus and God the same? Is Jesus less than God? Such perplexing issues may seem trivial to some today, but among



Trinity by Sue Newham

the early Christians, they were of vital importance and the cause of many arguments and divisions.

Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated among the early church leaders to clarify the relationship between Jesus and God. Spirit seemed to be a secondary topic with much less controversy. A highly educated man named Tertullian, a leader of the African church, made explaining Christianity to new converts his cause. In the early third century, he gave the first defense of the doctrine of the Trinity explicitly defined as “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

He noted that the majority of the believers in his day did not agree with his doctrine. Indeed, there was a wild variety of theories and beliefs in the early church. Some historians think it was necessary for there to be a common base of beliefs in order to have the explosive growth of early

Christianity. Christianity went from some 20 people in the year of Jesus’ death to 3 million people 300 years later, half the Roman Empire. It became the official religion of Rome in 380 CE. Today, Trinitarian Christianity is the largest religious group in the world.

EXPANDING THE TRINITY

I believe the Trinity must evolve to make sense of the new realities in today’s more advanced and expansive worldview.

While an early breakthrough in understanding God, the traditional Trinity today has serious limitations. It is patriarchal, making God into a male being. It’s language limits God to the personal. It limits divinity to a closed circle that leaves us out. It makes God seem exceedingly small compared to an infinite cosmos.

Integral Christianity advocates a broader and more inclusive understanding of God than is communicated by the traditional framing the Trinity. This evolved Trinity includes the classical Trinity and, at the same time, transcends its limitations.

Jesus talked about, to, and as God



I reread the Gospels one day with the integral framework in mind that Ken Wilber calls the “Big Three.” These are the three fundamental perspectives about any situation that we all learned back in elementary school: third-person (about), second-person (to), and first-person (as).

After pouring over the Gospels once again, I realized that Jesus related to God in these same three ways. First, he often talked about God. Then, sometimes, he talked to God. And finally, at times, he seemed to talk as God. These are the three perspectives we can have about anything. For instance, I can talk about my partner, to my partner, and if given permission, speak for (or as) my partner.



The Holy Trinity - El Greco 1755-1758

It was then I had a eureka moment. Jesus not only talked about God, to God, and as God, *he said that we can, too!* That put together some things for me that were so life changing, that I wrote my next two books about it! Here are these three dynamics, or faces of God.

THE INFINITE FACE OF GOD-BEYOND-US

Behind the God that Jesus talked about was always the awesome Creator of heaven and earth. Moses was told this face of God-Beyond-Us is the I AM of Infinite Being. Paul taught the Infinite Face of God is “one in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Something of this Infinite Face of God-Beyond-Us was always there in the Jewish culture of Jesus’ day, even though the world was seen in a much smaller and more limited way. When Jesus focused on the closeness of a personal, intimate, and loving God, he was bringing this vast, transcendent face of God into a face that could be experienced personally.

However, our understanding of the world today is much bigger. In today’s world, we have the “overview effect.” Astronauts report a cognitive shift in awareness during spaceflight while viewing Earth from outer space.

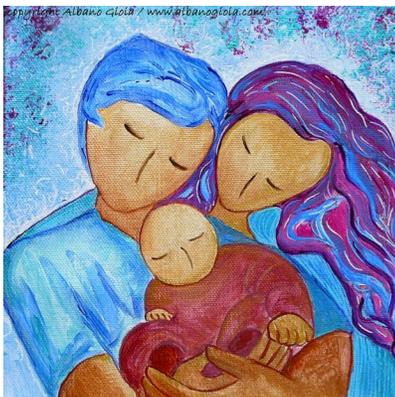
Astronaut Bob Behnken said, “It is the experience of seeing firsthand the reality of the Earth in space, which is immediately understood to be a tiny, fragile ball of life, ‘hanging in the void,’ shielded and nourished by a paper-thin atmosphere. From space, national boundaries vanish, the conflicts that divide people become less important, and the need to create a planetary society with the united will to protect this ‘pale blue dot’ becomes both obvious and imperative.”

At an even larger scale, I am fascinated by the glorious images of the vast cosmos taken by the Hubble Space Telescope. When I put myself into them, I experience a little something of the overview effect while contemplating how immense, likely infinite, our universe is.

If the universe is infinite, how can God be greater than infinity? If God is not a being but being itself, then God as Infinite Being and Consciousness holds all things, even infinity itself.



The Hand of God by urbanushido



Mother Father Love by Albano Goia

THE INTIMATE FACE OF GOD-BESIDE-US

Jesus magnificently modeled what the Intimate Face of God looks and feels like. This divine personal presence is pure love. However, not just love in the abstract, but love in the most intimate, dynamic way we first experience it — from a loving mother and father.

Incredibly, he talked to God, calling this personal divine presence by the same name he called his father, Abba (“Daddy” or “Papa” in today’s language). We should note that father was the corporate personality that included mother in Jesus’ day in a way that is not true today. God is beside us as a loving father and mother.

This presence of God, ever since the resurrection, is now also found in the

presence of the Living Jesus as Christianity's originating and defining figure. This is the personal, spiritual presence of Jesus available to anyone at any time. The first Christians began talking with Jesus in his non-physical spirit body immediately after the resurrection, along with countless others have down through the centuries. We can too!



Jesus also found divine guidance and help in two of his spiritual friends, Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. Talking and praying to saintly figures such as Mary began around the third century and was later affirmed by church leaders such as Augustine and Aquinas. Just as they were for Jesus at the Transfiguration, these evolved spiritual beings are available and present for us, and can find a meaningful place in our circle of spiritual helpers. We can engage in conversation, emotional interaction, touch, sensation, vision, and olfactory experience with these spiritual presences.

Jesus not only modeled relating intimately to God, but he taught us to connect with God-Beside-Us.

THE INNER FACE OF GOD-BEING-US



"Rivers of Living Water shall flow from your womb - Jesus"

Jesus so identified with God inwardly, that he acted as God's hands, feet, and voice to the world around him. He was so united to God that he said he was one with God.

Jesus invites us to that same identification. This is the inner realization that we are all already made in the image and likeness of God, the very first thing the Bible says about us in Genesis.

Early in the book of Matthew, Jesus makes a stunning declaration: "Jesus said to them, 'You are the light of the world'" (Matt. 5:14). How could others be the light of the world when Jesus was to later say that he was light of the world? This could only be possible if we, along with Jesus, are all the light of the world because we all hold the divine image of God within us.

The writer of 2 Peter 1:4 says that "we are participants in the divine nature."

Later, the fourth-century bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius and others, declared that "God became Humanity so that Humanity could become God."

This is God-Being-Us.

THE THREE FACES OF GOD

God-Beyond-Us is the transpersonal, nontheistic, cosmic face of God that is big enough for our minds, the mystery always inviting us further beyond our understanding.

God-Beside-Us is the intersubjective, personal, and theistic face of God that comes in a myriad of forms (God, Jesus, the saints, nature, a friend, etc.) that is close enough for our hearts.

God-Being-Us is the subjective, mystical, inner face of God, which is called by such names as True Self, Christ Consciousness, Buddha Nature, Enlightened Self, or Divine Self. This is the God us enough for our own deepest identity in our womb.

This expanded, evolved Trinity integrates the traditional Trinity, the masculine and feminine, Jesus' divinity and our divinity, and the infinite Cosmic Divine, as well as the personal presence of God with us. That is extremely exciting for me!

This evolved Trinity, the Three Faces of God, is an evolved way of understanding God that provides the foundation for the practice and experience of Integral Prayer.



Trinity by Lance McNeel

For further reading: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin - <https://omegacenter.info/teilhard-three-faces-of-god/> and the *Three Faces of God* by Paul Smith.

Evolving Prayer with an Evolving God

Praying into, with, and from the Three Faces of God



"The image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15-17) by Chris Powers

Integral Prayer part 3 - by Luke Healy

Prayer is communication and communion. It is the WeSpace between God and us. This divine meeting place usually changes throughout our lives as we grow and develop. We change, and so does our understanding and experience of God. Often we don't quite know how to pray in a way that seems to resonate fully with these changes.

Can we still find an evolving God in prayer? Can we still meet God in the dynamic unfolding of our relationship with the divine?

While at times we may need to demythologize, deconstruct, and differentiate through our ideas of God, hopefully, we can continue on our journey without throwing the baby out with the bathwater. We can

find our way to more liberating ways to meet with the divine, which can include and reintegrate the healthy gifts of traditional prayer.

This becomes possible through recognizing The Three Faces of God, which gives us the freedom to hold an understanding of God that encompasses the breadth of divine presence and manifestation. Moving then from this understanding into the WeSpace, into the participatory experience of communing with each of these faces is what we call Integral Prayer.

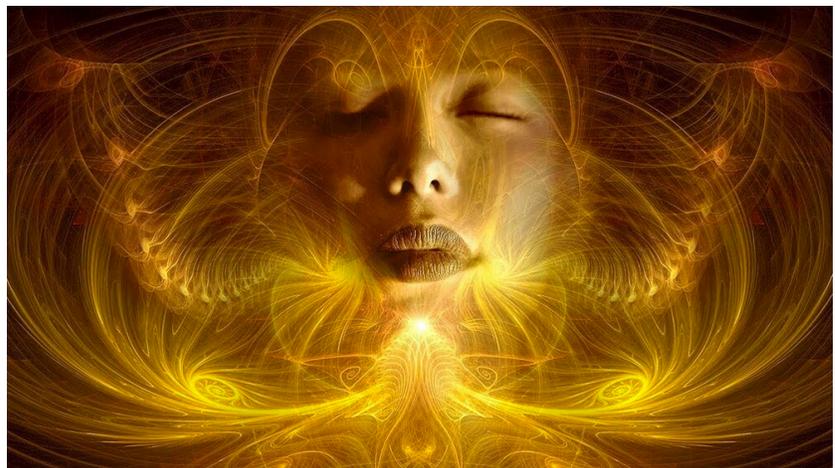
Our prayer can evolve with each of these three faces, meeting God in transcendence, relationship, and participation.

Let's look at these evolutions in prayer with each of our faces of God.

PRAYING INTO THE INFINITE FACE OF GOD-BEYOND-US IN TRANSCENDENCE

Many prayers to the great God beyond are usually akin to shooting rockets into the sky. Or throwing out a message in a bottle.

Some non-religious people—well, and a good number of religious too—find themselves praying to this impersonal, “God in the sky” cosmic force, especially in moments of desperation. There is no real expectation of response, perhaps other than a bolt of lightning. And there certainly isn't any listening for return communication. It is almost a sort of magical incantation.



This is quite often also true of scripted prayers, or repetitious liturgical prayer offerings, including The Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary's, The Jesus Prayer, and more.

This is prayer **at** God.

Eventually, praying at this “God in the sky” doesn't seem to make sense. Between the vast and sheer expanse of the cosmos and the understanding of the mythic nature of many of the Zeus-like pictures of God in our heads, we discover the need for a much bigger God than the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain, one that is beyond the previous understandings of our minds.

This is the Infinite Face of God. Not a distant and unknowable God, but certainly one who is constantly beyond us. This is God as infinite mystery. Mystery that continues to unfold, that is infinitely discoverable, that is inviting us further and further into that mystery.

What does prayer look like with God-Beyond-Us? How can we commune with the great beyond?

Through transcendence.

In Integral Prayer, we go from praying **at** the “God in the sky” and begin to pray **into** the infinite God-Beyond-Us through transcendent prayer and meditation.

We can move into transcendence through each of our four centers of spiritual knowing in Whole-Body Mystical Awakening, which we'll explore in depth in a future article in this series.

PRAYING WITH THE INTIMATE FACE OF GOD-BESIDE-US IN RELATIONSHIP

Personal prayer **to** God is one of the earliest and most traditional forms of prayer. We talk to God, make requests, ask for blessings, and more.

As we grow up, often these types of direct, personal prayers get left behind. Do we still believe God or Jesus is there with us? Or is that just an imaginary friend from a childlike naivety? Often the messages of modern materialism cause us to doubt the reality of such nonphysical presences.



Eucharistia by Ladislav Zaborsky

Many even give up on this type of prayer entirely, moving to more of a meditative spiritual practice that embraces silence and the God within. This is certainly a helpful way of praying, which we'll look at more in the next section, but it need not require the loss of intimate, relational prayer with God's motherly/fatherly presence, Jesus, Mary, or other spiritual guides.

Are they really here with us? How can we know?

As long as we're simply praying **to** someone, we quite likely will begin to doubt the reality of their presence. Intimate prayer really comes alive when we open up to the relational dynamic where we don't just talk to God, but pray **with** God. Any good relationship isn't one-sided, and these personal presences of the divine—they have a lot to offer us as well!

If you've gone through some "demythologizing" or simply were raised in Western rationalism, trying to pray in this way may be difficult at first, almost like you're imagining it all. That is the message your logical mind wants to keep putting before you.

The tricky part is that there's a truth in that, but it's not all of the truth. Engaging in the subtle realm with spiritual presences is a cocreative act, which means that we participate in the form of the reality that is presenting itself. We have to



choose to be open to that nonphysical reality arising in our senses—the mind (what we sometimes dismissively call “the imagination”), but also our hearts, spiritual wombs, and body. They will look a little differently to each one of us.

At the same time, the presences themselves also have a separate, ontological reality. They are very real, and countless billions have connected with them down through the ages, including Jesus. We discover relationship **with** these spiritual presences the more we open to it, and the more we go to that meeting space, just like any spiritual practice.

Beloved by Robby Donaghey

We may be surprised at who shows up there. As we evolve, we may need new and different presences as guides. Jesus is the primary form of God-Beside-Us for Christians, but some may carry baggage or triggers with him for various reasons. We may need a feminine presence, someone from another tradition, an ancestor, or others who emerge from the great cloud of witnesses.

In Integral prayer, we go from prayer **to** the God of our imagination to praying **with** God-Beside-Us, with personal spiritual presences, learning to listen and engage in relationship—in both communication and the deep communion of simply being with a loving, caring presence.

PRAYING FROM THE INNER FACE OF GOD-BEING-US IN PARTICIPATION

Moving in prayer practice into the reality of God-Being-Us is not usually something we experience early in life—though we may have had mystical moments of oneness at a young age.

Owning our identification as a divine being, an expression of God ourselves is more than likely still a growing edge for most of us. Many forms of contemplative prayer seek to help us move beyond our limited identities and help us accept and identify more **as** this divine self. Do we believe it?

We can hear it from Catherine of Genoa, “My deepest me is God.” Or perhaps Meister Eckhart, “The eye with which I see God is the same eye that God sees me.” Or Jesus, “I and the Father are one” (“That they may be one, just as you and I are one”).



While it may be hard enough to dare to claim our divine identify, there is even another step further. It is to take the step from identification to active participation.

As 2 Peter 1:4 says, “We are participants in the divine nature.”

So how would we actually participate in our divine nature?

In Integral Prayer, we take seriously our identification **as** divine and then seek to pray **from** this immanent God-Being-Us, from our Christ consciousness.

Learning to pray from this incarnated, divine consciousness is a primary practice in our WeSpace groups. We do this in a fully embodied way, learning to listen from each of our centers of spiritual knowing—not

simply from our constructed self, but from the knowing state of divine arisings—and then sharing that with one another.

We are not speaking for God, like the prophets of old—we claim no such authority (and would be right to suspect such assertion, as they usually are an abusive attempt to wield power). We are doing what the apostle Paul refers to in his letters as “speaking forth.” This can be verbal or simply engaging in the flow of transmission, shining the light of love silently to one another. More about that in a future writing.

INTEGRAL PRAYER

Praying **from** this consciousness of God-Being-Us, **with** God-Beside-Us, and **into** God-Beyond-Us are the movements of the spiritual practice we call Integral Prayer.

Integral Prayer liberates us to pray in each of these ways, into/with/from each of these perspectives. We don't have to pick just one. And we can then develop and deepen our understanding and practice in each of these perspectives, or faces of God. Or whichever is needed at the moment.

Sometimes one of these ways of prayer is at the forefront for us. It could be at this time we need to focus in on our WeSpace into the transcendent God or maybe from the Immanent God. And that is wonderful and beautiful.

When the time comes, God may turn again. You find another face before you. And you can welcome the gaze of God beckoning you onward, into further communion. Into the salacious audacity of divine participation, ecstatic intimacy, and celestial transcendence.



Trinity by Katie Daw



"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deuteronomy 33:27) by Chris Powers

Waking Up with Integral Prayer

A Spiritual Practice for Emerging Consciousness



Prayer by Anita Sofia Siuda

INTEGRAL PRAYER PART 4 - by Luke Healy

Integral Prayer not only connects us more fully and holistically with an evolving God but is also a spiritual practice that deepens and develops our consciousness in an integrated way. Developing our consciousness through spiritual practice will be the most transforming and liberating if it can include the breadth and depth of our divine, human, and material reality. If it can engage in transcendence *and* immanence, relationship *and* individuality, interior *and* exterior, masculine *and* feminine, and further integrations.

At this moment, the world desperately needs people who are able to live and give from an embodied wholeness, who have access to a deeper way of spiritual knowing, indeed mystics who experience reality from a greater depth of connection and being—beneath the surface of chaos and disorder, offering love and life to the world from the hidden wholeness and the abundant source.

To come to this place, we need to awaken into new ways of being. Teaching and mental education alone will not transform us in this way. Not all spiritual practices will get us there either. We need a practice that can bring us into the space of emergent consciousness, the unfolding and arising of new growth and evolution from spirit. We believe this happens most effectively when we are practicing from a fully embodied being, and is enhanced when in a shared, collective field with others.

Let's look at how these qualities of Integral Prayer can help us wake up to higher, deeper consciousness, and then at some of the effects we are already seeing from this practice.

EMBODIMENT

To move into a fuller consciousness of knowing we must move beyond the confines of limiting ourselves to only our mental, cognitive processes. Research from the California Institute of Integral Studies has suggested that humans have multiple centers of knowing. Our practice of Whole-Body Mystical Awakening adapts this research (as well as many other sources) into a process of moving into a state of embody-full-ment, of tuning into an energetic knowing state from our centers of spiritual knowing in our body—heart, spiritual womb, feet, and head.



Rise of the Divine Feminine by Jaison Cianelli

When we pray *from* each of these spaces, we are tuning into and participating with our divine being in new and profound ways. This also opens us up to new growing edges of learning from within our own bodies, learning new “mystical languages” as ways of speaking and transmitting from this Christ consciousness—the meeting point of divine and material reality as expressed in how “we live, move, and have our being.”

More about this next week.

COLLECTIVE



Shabbat Family Lighting by Yoram Raanan

Integrating the relational field into our spiritual practice has the potential to actually expand our capacity and enhance the quality of our experience. Other people are not a distraction. The shared energy of focused engagement in the WeSpace has a heightening effect. It moves us into a flow that transmits and energizes us in our practice. We are deeply supported by one another.

Entering into WeSpace helps move us into a new way of being that actively participates in the spiritual reality that we are not separate from one another. We can wake up to this reality much more readily and directly if our spiritual practice purposefully and directly invites us into the felt sense of this unity, the participatory experience of our deep engagement and spiritual interbeing with all others.

When we pray with others who are also intentionally participating in their Christ consciousness, we share with one another in the reality of the human-divine connection. We offer strength, encouragement, and comfort to one another from this integrated and awakened state imbued with love. That love among us is deeply enriching, and

it invites us to a more expansive field. Our embrace widens as we deepen and have greater openness to the source of more love to give to others.

In this relational field, we also are open to connecting deeper with spiritual guides who can offer wisdom, encouragement, comfort, and love. And they delight in inviting us onward into the terrain of emergent possibility, into further growth and greater reality.

EMERGENT

Waking up in our spiritual practice is not a one-time, momentary event. It is a series of awakenings, an unfolding process that happens in a myriad of ways, touching each of our facets of reality.

This is why it's so vital to cultivate a space and practice that is regularly opening us up to what is new, what is arising. We are learning an attunement to not what we already know, but what we are about to know.



This openness to receive empowers us to actively participate in our spiritual unfolding, and it's amazing to experience what can arise. When we open this space in a shared field, in a collective context, we can move in the cocreation of the unfolding offerings. We can discover wisdom and guidance we wouldn't have heard otherwise, deep care and spontaneous expressions of love, and other gifts from spirit/awakened consciousness. And of course, this knowing is not just in our minds, but in all of our body centers.

When we pray into the expansive invitation to participation in the mystery, we are moving into the posture of receiving the words of spirit, the voices of higher and deeper consciousness ever-offering and ever-giving. Spirit is beckoning onward, into the evolution of the world, together with the groanings of creation into greater liberation and freedom, into the new ways of being on this earth.

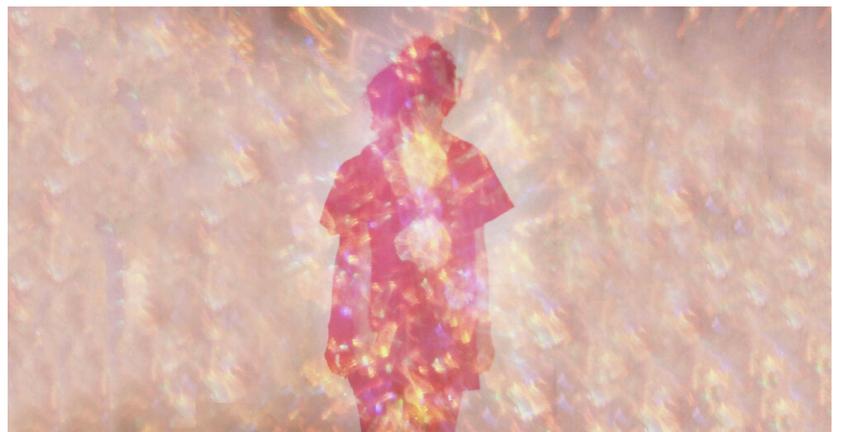
THE EFFECTS OF INTEGRAL PRAYER

When we choose to pray or meditate, we do so for a variety of reasons. Many forms of prayer and practice tend to focus on one or two of these aims. In this way, they assume that most people have time for a wide variety of different practices and times of prayer.

This might be true in a monastic context, but in our current world this just simply is not the case for the majority of people. Most are already overburdened with the demands of responsibilities and the cares of life. We so often only have the time and energy for one practice, if even that.

Taking an integrative approach, Integral Prayer seeks to create an intention that can move into and incorporate many more benefits and possibilities into a single spiritual practice.

While many of the effects and outcomes of this practice are still unfolding, here are some of the results that we're already seeing:



We are becoming more integrated, holistic, and complete humans. We are awakening the radiant love and bliss in our heart, coming home to presence our bodies, and tapping into the fullness of our being and the wellspring of our divine identity. We are beginning to learn to participate in that divine nature. We are living more deeply into the experience of not being separate from God.

We are becoming more deeply connected to one another in the reality of our interbeing, expanding our capacity for experience, love, and holding. We are awakening to the “We,” the intersubjective, interpersonal reality between us and all things, beyond the confining boundaries of our small selves. We are beginning to learn how to lovingly transmit and move among the interconnected space. We are living more deeply into the experience of not being separate from one another.

We are becoming more open to the emergent and nascent reality that is pushing forth with great intensity in response to the dire need we find ourselves in at this time. We are awakening to the arising of the whispers of spirit within, among, and beyond us, calling us into greater wholeness and joy. We are beginning to learn how to recognize the beckoning of Omega into the birthing labor of what lies ahead. We are living more deeply into the experience of not being separate from the earth and all of expanding creation.

In these ways and more, we are discovering new ways of being that are more holistic, inclusive, expansive, and loving. One step at a time, we are participating in our awakening.

INTEGRATED PRACTICE

Integral Prayer is a spiritual practice that can significantly expand our possibilities for growth and participation in the development of our consciousness. The wider embrace allows for a greater range of growth, in addition to the breadth of engagement in how we encounter the divine in each of the Three Faces of God.

While it may sound like a lot, we don't need to feel burdened by doing it all at once. With the bigger field, at any time, we can gravitate toward the space we need to move in more deeply. We quite often will even be guided there by spirit. Through including the many facets of our being and reality, it also gives us a greater capacity to respond to our current state—individually and collectively—and meet it with the dynamic necessary for the present moment.

Crucially, this whole process of developing our consciousness is not for our own personal betterment or bolstering our egoic sense of self. All this we do in loving service to one another and the earth.

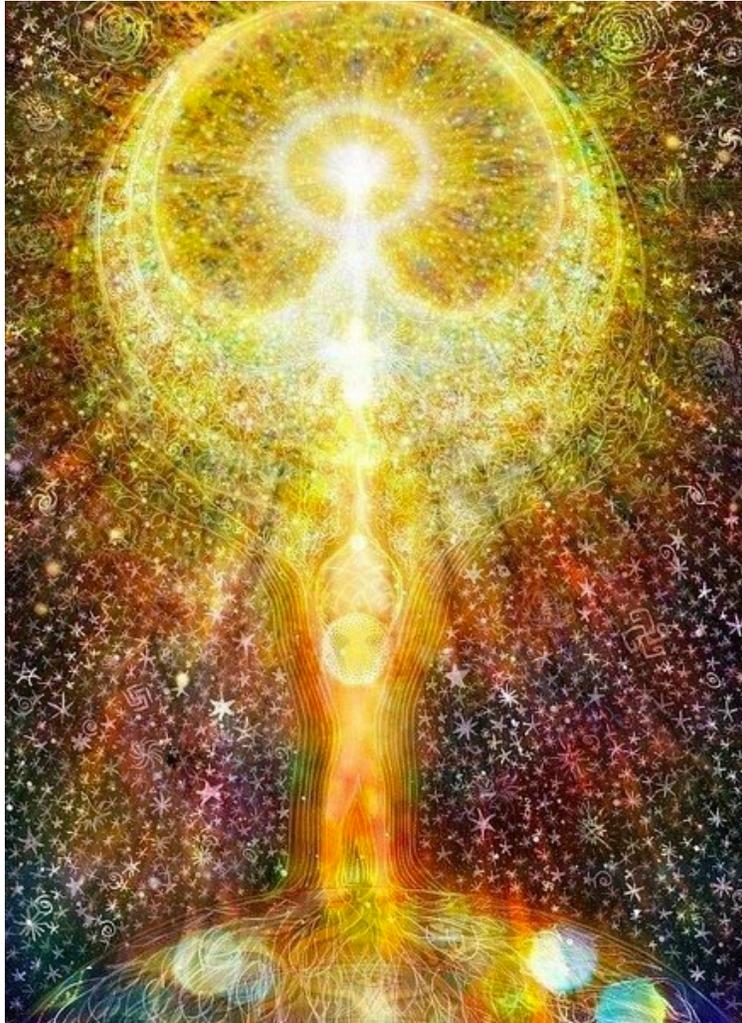
Waking up in this way allows us to be mystics in the world, living, breathing, knowing, giving from a deeper, more holistic consciousness. Transmitting love and offering healing to the earth. Living into the participation in divine nature, becoming the body of Christ, given for all.



Prayer for Earth by Rassouli

Do You Believe in God Being You?

Enacting God in our Being



Integral Prayer – Part 5 by Luke Healy

In Integral Christianity, we boldly claim and own the 1st-person reality of God-Being-Us, that we can identify as divine expressions of God. This is not us trying to become God through any kind of ego movement. It is a movement of awakening into the already present reality of God being us, into Christ consciousness.

In Integral Prayer with the Three Faces of God, we even seek to enact and speak from this divine consciousness. This is learning to take the step from divine identity to divine participation (2 Peter 1:4).

Learning to pray *from* God-Being-Us is something of a big step for a lot of us. And we may have a few mental hurdles that we need to leap before we can begin to attempt praying from God in our very own embodied being, from our own awakened Christ consciousness.

So this week, we'll go through a little Q&A around some of those pesky skeptical thoughts we might find arising in our minds when we begin to speak about living out our divine participation in our knowing. And then next week we'll look more specifically at how we experience this from within our own bodies.

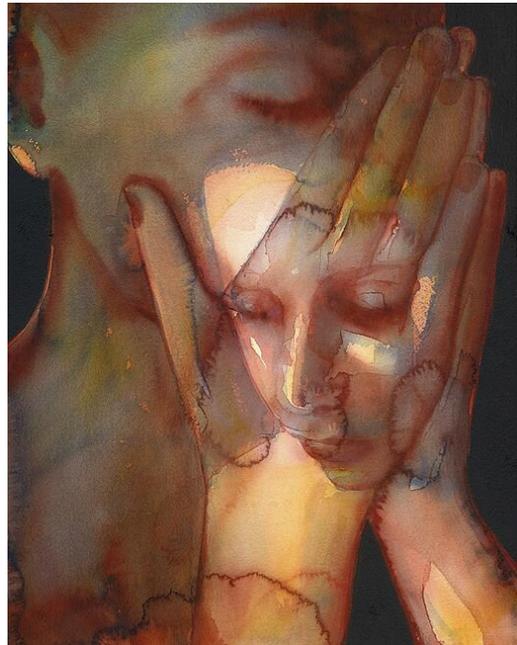
IS PRAYING FROM GOD THE SAME AS HEARING GOD?

Not exactly. While we can hear from God in 2nd person communication, our divine participation is God talking as or from us. Or rather, we are "hearing from" ourselves—from our deeper self as the interior expressions of our divinity. It is a form of intra-personal communication, an opening into the consciousness of sensing and knowing from our awakened divine consciousness.

So what we "hear" or sense are not just our normal thoughts, but the arisings of our deeper divine consciousness "speaking" to us from each of our centers of spiritual knowing. In this way, we are praying or communicating with the divine in and as ourselves.

Another term for this being and knowing is Christ consciousness.

Christ is Christian symbol for the integration of divine and material reality. The divine subsists in all of material reality. That includes you!



This Christ consciousness is not external to or withheld from us. It is not only attainable after years of spiritual practice and stripping away of our false or constructed self. We can awaken to it in a variety of ways and often with a degree of suddenness.

At Pentecost, the consciousness of divine indwelling came to the followers of Jesus. They were ecstatic with the energy of God's spirit. It poured out from each person in expressions according to that person's gifting.

While this spirit outpouring is often pictured as coming upon them from outside, the "tongues of fire" much more arose from the awakening of the spirit/consciousness within, from our very bodies as part of the body of God. Both the apostle Paul and Jesus in the book of John tried to communicate this, saying "you are all the body of Christ" and "rivers of living water (spirit/consciousness) will flow from your womb."

Awakening to our Christ consciousness is to embody the interior awareness of the divine in your full physical self—your body in the body of Christ. This is the incarnation which was in Jesus and is in us as well. This is the at-one-ment of the unity with God.

And God is not just a passive force that energizes the universe. Sometimes we functionally relate to God in this way, and therefore become a sort of panentheistic deist—that God is present in all but doesn't "speak" or relate in/from that presence.

The Christian story is all about God at work within the world, through all things, with all things, in loving communication and communion. We embrace our participation in that active presence by moving into

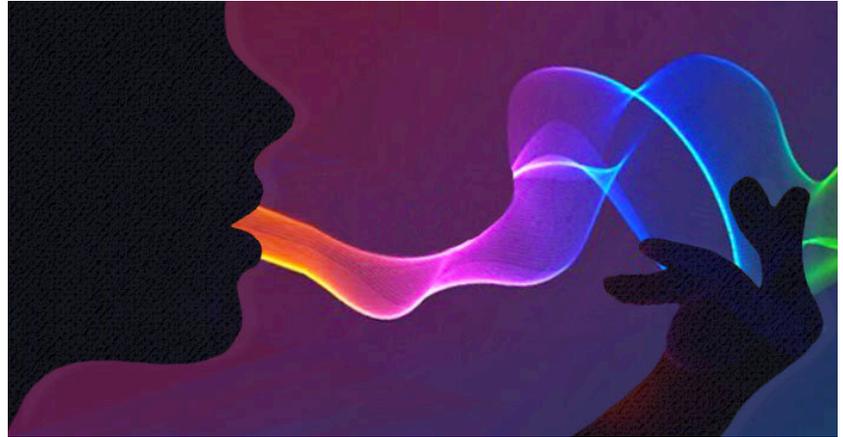
our participation in divine consciousness, knowing from God within and learning to enact it or speak forth in the world.

SO NOW I CAN SPEAK WITH THE VOICE OF GOD?

In a way, yes. But it's important to remember that we are not speaking for God, as a way to try to claim special authority and power. The clincher for this is that Paul says that others will decide, not us, whether we are speaking from God or not (1 Cor. 14:29). That's why we encourage feedback from others.

One reason we may shy away from claiming this reality is that we certainly don't want to fall into the errors of traditional religious pride that took on this claim hubristically, as a sign of authority to try to justify oppressive domination or as a marker of superiority and separation. That is not divine participation, but simple ego inflation.

The fear of this abuse or misuse need not keep us from claiming our participation and expression from our divine self. And we need not take a purist view either, that we must be fully free of one before we can live in the other. As long as we are seeking to live in it with humility and love, we are free to explore and discover the ways of being from this divine consciousness.



HOW DO I TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRIST CONSCIOUSNESS SPEAKING AND MY OWN THOUGHTS?

This is a process of discernment that grows with time and practice.

Moving into this state of consciousness is opening to receiving from the emergent arisings beyond our normal, everyday consciousness.

At first, they mostly come in the form of receiving emergent (or new) "thoughts." These are not just our typical rational thoughts in our head, but have a different tenor and quality to them. And they certainly do not come only in the form of words—the "thoughts" from all our embodied centers arise in many different forms.

These messages of awakened consciousness still sound like you, but they are somehow fuller and richer. They often have a sense of significance or a compelling energy behind them. While they may appear as fleeting impressions, in time we can learn to be sensitive to receiving and distinguish them from random or distracting thoughts.

When moving into this state of receptivity, almost all of us will have some things coming up from our shadow, projections or messages that are more related to our own stories and wounds.

These arisings tend to feel more constricted and heavier. They are also important and can be addressed through shadow work and other forms of "cleaning up."



Here the words of Jorge Ferrer might also help:

"It is important here to distinguish sharply between the modern hyperindividualistic mental ego and the participatory selfhood forged in the sacred fire of spiritual individuation. Whereas the disembodied modern self is plagued by alienation, dissociation, and narcissism, a spiritually individuated person has an embodied, integrated, connected, and permeable identity whose high degree of differentiation, far from being isolating, actually allows him or her to enter into a deeply conscious communion with others, nature, and the multidimensional cosmos."

This consciousness will lead us into communion, whether that be with nature or with others. Its nature is to expand us in this way.

As such, one of the best ways of discerning comes by practicing in a collective context open to experimenting and discovering together, such as a WeSpace group. Here we can receive feedback from others that can often be very affirming as we seek together to learn this way of divine knowing, of praying from Christ consciousness.

While outside encouragement and affirmation is helpful, ultimately the best step we can take is learning to trust our own experience. When we are in the deep flow of this consciousness, we just know that there is truth and value in what is arising, whether we receive affirmation that appeases our rational mind or not.

WHY DO I NEED TO CLAIM THAT WHAT I AM KNOWING IS DIVINE?

Not to feel special or to receive praise, as we believe anyone can participate in this divine consciousness. Not for special authority or a feeling of superiority, as divine consciousness arises for the giving of love and life, not the taking.

We claim our divine identity because it is part of the process of *remembering who we are*. It is claiming our nature as children of God, living in the divine nature that is our birthright.

Distancing ourselves from trying to live from our Christ consciousness is not humility, but a denying of our given divine identity.

And so to truly embrace this identity, we seek to live and speak from it—not just as an underlying, background reality. But as a choice to embrace and enact our life from the core of our deepest nature.

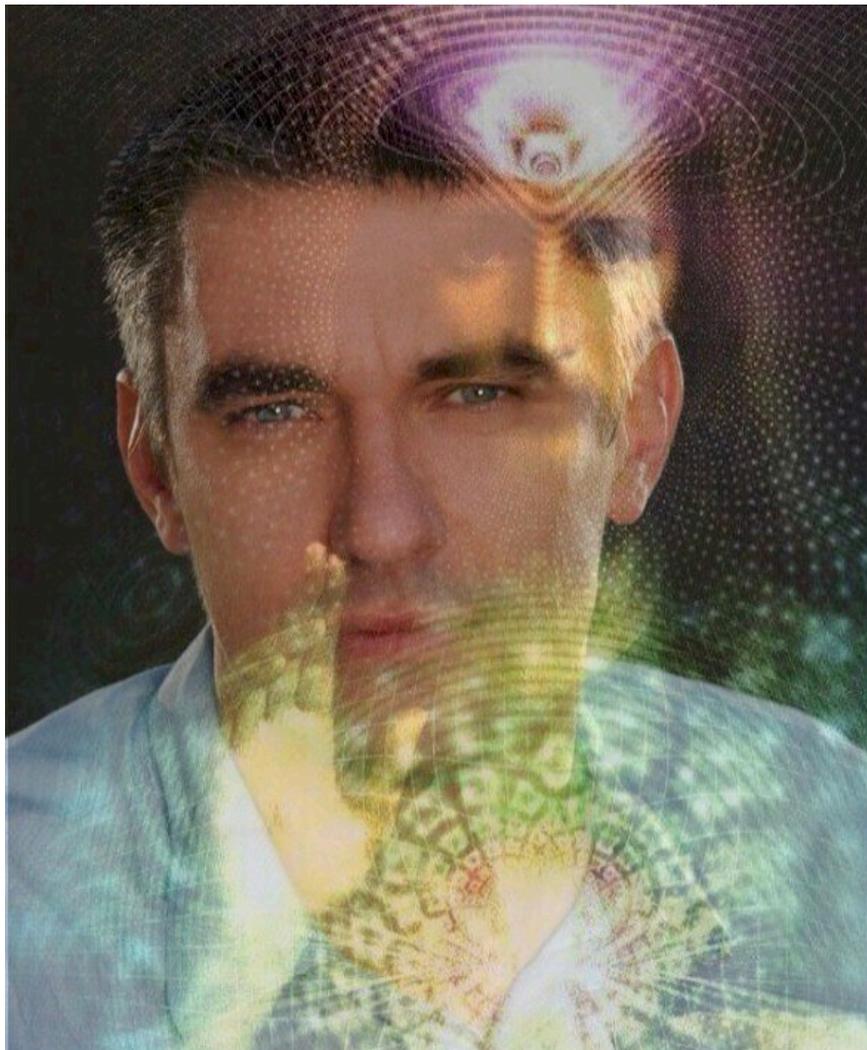


The nature of this divine being is always rooted and sourced from love.

By embracing our participation in our divinity, we step into the empowerment to live and give from our whole incarnated being. Therefore, our energy, words, and actions can come *from* this Christ consciousness. It is embodied in our entire being, not just our mind.

We discover this within by moving into the states of awakened consciousness, which is exactly what the Whole-Body Mystical Awakening practice seeks to help us develop. It moves us into the practice of paying attention and sensing from each of our centers of spiritual knowing within: heart, feet, spiritual womb, and head.

We'll look at divine participation from each of these centers next week.



Living from Christ Consciousness

Praying From Your Inner Divinity

Embodied Awakened Consciousness



Integral Prayer – Part 6 by Luke Healy

There are three movements to Integral Prayer (into, with, and from), and this week we'll go more in depth with the 1st-person movement of praying from your inner divinity.

In traditional prayer, we are generally trying to “reach out” to God from our ordinary self. In Integral Prayer from our 1st person inner divinity, we are instead coming from our awakened consciousness within in order to reach out to others.

This flips the script of prayer, empowering us to own our divine self, our part in the body of God, our participation in divine nature. In this movement, God is not a separate being that we have to seek out, but rather we become God's movement to others in love.

We do this best by moving into a state of consciousness that opens us up to embodied awareness in an energetic way, moving into our Christ consciousness (the divine and material incarnation—“in whom we live, move and have our being”). We call this state awakened consciousness.

It's usually helpful at first to access this consciousness through a meditation that moves us into this energetic, embodied state, such as our Whole-Body Mystical Awakening. With more practice, we can move into this awakened state at any time throughout our day—or even all the time! We can then not only pray from but live out of this inner divinity as well.

AWAKENING DIVINE CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE FOUR CENTERS

To get to this state of awakened consciousness, we usually need a transition from our ordinary consciousness. We call this the *entry state* that helps clear away the interior chatter and regular impulses we generally experience in our everyday self. This state is one of attention.

From there, we can move into the *knowing state* of awakened consciousness, which is more a state of *awareness from*—not awareness of, *which is a very crucial distinction*.

We are not doing this as a type of body scan, simply noticing or thinking about places in our body. We are not viewing our bodies like a separate object, but moving into sensing from these centers as organs of perception and knowing. Our whole body participates in our consciousness—not just our head/mind.

Each center of spiritual knowing has its own entry state and awakened knowing state (and unitive or transcendent state, which we'll explore more in a future writing).

So let's go through the four centers and see how we move from the entry state into the awakened knowing state in each. We'll look at the nature of expressions that arise in the knowing state, and then how we can both *pray from* and *live out of* this awakened consciousness.

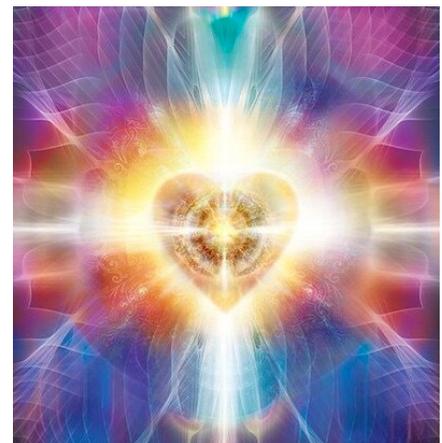
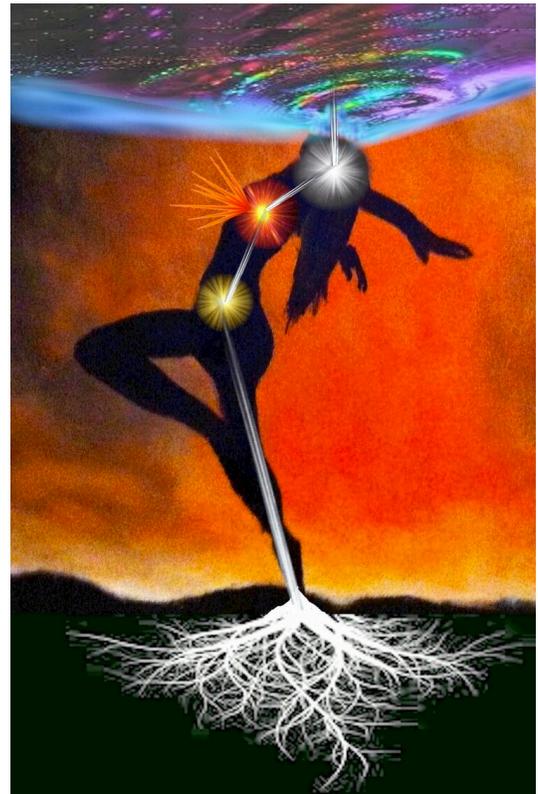
While many different arisings can come from this awakened state in each of the centers, here are some of what we've identified so far.

HEART

We always start with the heart, because it is our primary center for moving into the energy of love. This deep love is also the heart of our divine consciousness, for God is love.

Beginning in our heart also gets us out of the trappings of our head most easily as well. In our entry state, we drop our attention down into our heart and the energy of the flow of love.

We move into the knowing state by awakening to awareness from the radiant center in the deep heart, the core of our hearts emanating love and bliss.



When we pray from this center in awakened consciousness for others, we transmit that love out. We can send that love in an energetic sense to other people, to cities, to the world. This energy can truly be felt by another through the concentrated energy field, especially coming from a group. We can also express this love in prayer for one another through heart-source images, words, or sensations.

We can live out of this divine heart by being charged with radiant love, energizing our actions and amplifying the connections and relationships in our lives. I dare say living primarily from this heart of awakened love would alone significantly transform our entire life and greatly affect those around us.

FEET

When we move to sensing from our feet, we are welcoming the material reality of our body and the earth. We are moving into the embodied energy of our physical being, of our skin and bones, of our very cells.

In the entry state, we ground ourselves to this deeper physical presence in this time and place, where we are now in our lives. We use the earth to help us in this rooting to the moment, keeping us oriented to our immanent presence. The earth also is a source of energy for our bodies, with a powerful energetic field in which we can tap into.

As we move into the knowing state from our feet, we begin to move into the felt sense of our incarnated entanglement. This is the experience that we are not separate from material reality—we are a part of it. We can feel the energy of deep intertwining in the very fibers of our cells. This is knowing from our interbeing.

When we pray from our feet, from our material embodiment, we can offer to others the feelings we are experiencing in our bodies from this state. Our awakened consciousness expresses somatic sensations and energy that are about ourselves or others. Praying in this way for others can bring them into greater physical awareness, felt embodied symbols and metaphors, and even healing.

We can live out of our divine feet by walking forth into our daily lives, into the vibrant reality of what constitutes our life in the immediate immanency of our individual and collective being. We can be grounded in the flow of earth energy and participate in the wave particles of incarnation.

WOMB

Moving to awareness from our womb is to move to the ground of our being, to the seat of our unique self and our divine self.

In the entry state, we center down into this space of vital holding, letting ourselves rest in the flowing embrace of generativity. It is a release into simply being.

In the knowing state, we begin to sense the arisings from the divine wellspring. These appear in the form of intuitions, or the sensations of courage and creativity.





We pray from our spiritual womb for others by offering to others our intuitions, the sense of knowing that we can't always quite explain rationally or give reasons why we know. We just know. It doesn't mean we can't be wrong, but often we're too timid to share these intuitions unless we feel like we can explain them in some way. The awakened womb is not subject to the mind but is given an active partnership.

We can live out of our divine womb by coming from this deep ground of being, living from a centered place of assurance and clarity. We follow this flow of being, guiding us through the offerings of our deepest intuitions into the truest expressions of our unique self, courageously creating and generating from this loving/eros energy.

HEAD

We are probably most familiar with the state of awareness from our heads, but often this space is filled with the tyrannical chatter of our busy minds. Or we think of our thoughts as reaching into the storage bank of acquired knowledge through education or training.

So for our entry state we need to clear the mind. While many meditation techniques essentially try to use the mind to still the mind, we have found that moving down into the energy of the heart, the radiant love and bliss, and then returning to the mind yields a surprisingly clear and vibrant stillness.

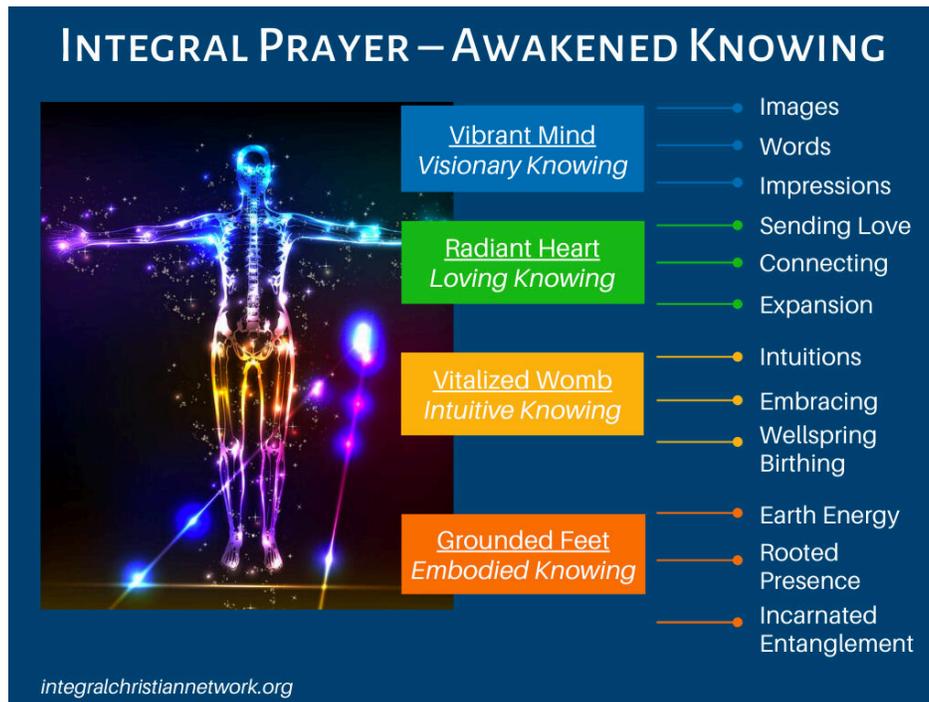
Here, many practices want to simply remain in the stillness or ascend to transcendence. Both of those are perfectly fine. But the knowing state in our heads is the place of awareness to the arisings of visionary knowing, which we welcome. This is "sight" or perception of the invisible world. These often come in the form of images, words, thoughts, and even smells or sounds. They have a different quality and feel than our usual thoughts. They also are not "under our control" like the imagination. They arise from this deeper state of knowing.



We pray from our minds by offering to others the visionary knowing and sight that comes forth. These can come in the form of images, pictures, words, sounds, smells. They are often symbolic and reflective of "thought" beyond rational explanation. They express through the metaphorical, offering wisdom that touches deeper into our whole being.

We can live out of this divine mind by approaching every situation with a deeper seeing, perceiving beyond the veil of the physical world and recognizing the visionary realm at work and present all around us at all times.

PRAYING AND LIVING

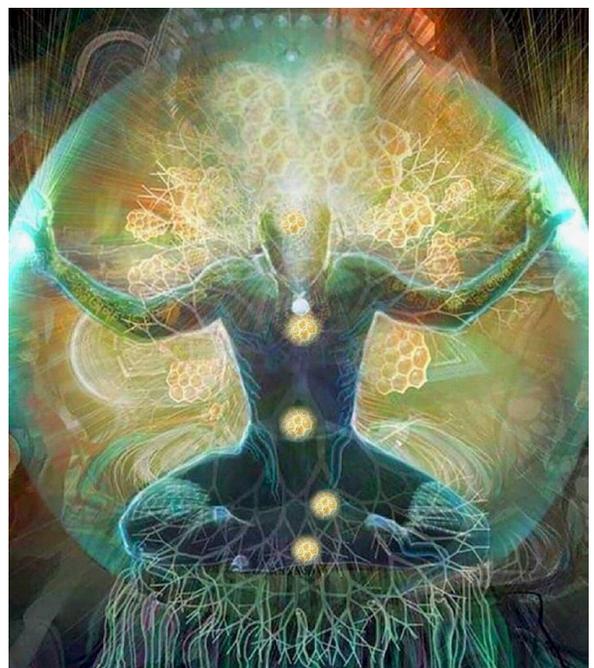


In each of these spaces, we can pray from and live out the knowing state of awakened mystical consciousness. These are two movements of how we show up in our lives and relationships from a new way of being, coming from our inner divinity.

If we feel uneasy or are still unsure about praying from our own inner divinity, we can practice first alone with ourselves. Eventually, we can get to the point where we feel comfortable sharing this knowledge with and for others, always offered with love and humility.

But waking up to pray in this way, to come from our inner divinity, this is not just an internal process. In fact, we can only go so far alone. The nature of God is in the communal dance of an evolved trinity, and so too our inner divinity needs the dance of relationality. This is the WeSpace prayer, which we will explore next week.

We are not separate from God. We have divine consciousness within us, not as an outside gift, but as the very nature of our deepest and truest selves. We can awaken to the experience of the new way of being of living from this embodied Christ consciousness—the Christ is you! We can pray from our incarnated being as we learn to listen to that divine voice that sounds like us, that sounds like our awakening into empowered, embodied divine participation.



Praying With God Being All of Us

WeSpace Prayer



Integral Prayer – Part 7 by Luke Healy

The second movement of Integral prayer is the shift from praying to God to praying with God. This is moving into the relationship of prayer, not just talking to someone, but enjoying the silence of one another's presence, and also speaking with one another.

Learning to pray with God-Beside-Us is the process of engagement with the personal face of God. This looks like learning to listen and interact with those in the invisible realm, like The Living Jesus, God's motherly/fatherly presence, Mary, or other spiritual guides.

And it can also look like praying with the face of God-Beside-Us *in all of us*.

Prayer is a movement of connection between God and us. But when we realize that God is not just "out there" and discover the divine face within, we also begin to recognize that this inner face of God is not just in us, but is in other people as well. Of course it is! And not just as a nice thought or way of looking at others, but even a consciousness from which we can share and pray with together—the personal face of God-Beside-Us in and among one another!

When we can intentionally share in this awakened consciousness together with others, we are joining in the awakened field of mystical communion. This is prayer as a communal participation, not as a performance or modeling, but as an inter-subjective participation in our divine interbeing.

We call this *WeSpace Prayer*. And here are some dynamics of how we pray in this way.

STRENGTHENING, ENCOURAGING, AND COMFORTING ONE ANOTHER

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire the gifts of the spirit . . . to speak forth for building up, encouragement, and tender consolation. (1 Cor. 14: 1, 3)

The vision and expression of church in early Christian communities was a place of deep care for one another. While amazing and non-ordinary things would often happen in the spirit of awakened consciousness, at the center of their church gatherings was a collective sharing of gifts from the heart of love for strengthening, encouraging, and comforting one another.

While we can certainly receive encouragement and wisdom from a pastor or priest speaking to a group audience, the focused care of interpersonal engagement from a group participating in awakened consciousness is far more powerful and personal.

And we deeply need this loving encouragement. We may even be so removed from receiving that type of intentional support that we don't even know how much we are carrying by ourselves. We don't realize what we are missing.

In WeSpace prayer, we practice moving into this direct care for one another from our embodied, awakened consciousness, seeking to sense from our centers of spiritual knowing (Part 6—last week's article) and then offering what arises in this spirit of love.

From this space of sensing and knowing from, we move into the WeSpace, into the group field. We primarily begin with focusing on each person for concentrated attention and care. We express this in two ways: silently engaging in the flow, or speaking forth with words.



Tender Togetherness by Jeanne-Marie Webb

ENGAGING IN THE FLOW



Learning to do this can sometimes be a little uncomfortable. We're not used to engaging relationally with this sort of direct care, especially with people we don't know very well. It can feel a little more intimate than what we're used to.

So we are free to give *silently* to one another through the energy of love in our hearts. This is called "heart transmission," and it can have a very powerful effect. Even though we can't necessarily put it into words, the felt experience of this flow giving or receiving in a group is profound and often just as powerful—if not more powerful—than the words spoken to one another.

The more we allow ourselves to engage in this flow, the more we discover that our hearts are filled with an inexhaustible source of loving energy coming from our radiant center. When we decide to become an intentional channel of this love, we switch from the common

orientation in spiritual gatherings focused on receiving and into being active participants in the flow of divine love and care.

And in the process, we discover too that our own hearts are more full from the giving and receiving, as we are coming more alive energetically in the awakening of our hearts.

SPEAKING FORTH

Of course, it's not just our hearts that are awakening. In the energy of the collective field, we also find it a little easier to sense arisings from our other centers of spiritual knowing, like we looked at last week.

As we are able to find our voice, we can “speak forth” what it is we are sensing—always done with humility and held loosely.



Sometimes it's helpful to begin by simply naming what we are experiencing, especially coming from our body centers, which are naturally less expressive in words. Just simply saying something like, “I'm feeling a lot of warmth in my heart” or “I'm noticing energy in my hands as we focus on you.” We don't even necessarily need to know what they mean, though sometimes we may have a sense. These offerings can go a long way to bringing forth the emergent quality of collective awakened consciousness.

To partake in the flow of this consciousness, we have to let go of what we already know and be open to what we are about to know. We are not sharing from our acquired knowledge or mental stories of understanding, but what is arising that needs to be spoken now in this moment, what God is offering to us through the knowing of our embodied awakened consciousness.

In releasing the familiar and secure, we take the divine hand reaching to us, offering to lead us in the dance of the arising consciousness of emergent knowing. The inner hand of God inviting us into the movement of divine participation in shared space of the community of communion.

MYSTICAL COMMUNION

The more we move into and practice in this WeSpace, the more we begin to recognize and sense the deep nature of our mystical interbeing, the experiential knowledge of our interconnection.

“By their very nature, and at every level of complexity, the elements of the world are able to influence and mutually to penetrate each other by their within, so as to combine their ‘radial energies’ in ‘bundles’... this psychic interpenetrability grows and becomes directly perceptible . . . it is written all over the social phenomenon and is, of course, felt by us directly.” –Teilhard de Chardin

What Teilhard is talking about here is the non-physical energetic fields that are constantly present in the spaces between and among people, even though we often aren't mentally cognizant of them. Perhaps we have had the experience of perceiving this when we walk into a room of people that just has a certain feeling, or maybe



Communion by Lorra Kurtz

we know a person who simply radiates love from their whole being.

This is a felt effect of the illusion of the finality of our physical boundaries that science has only further revealed since Teilhard wrote these words. Our hearts emit electromagnetic waves well beyond our bodies. On the quantum level, particles can be entangled across galaxies. We are not separate from one another.

We feel our “interpenetrability” on various levels, but can also grow in our perception and participation in this collective influence and permeation.



While we generally only notice the receptive effects of that energy on an instinctual or heart level, we can learn to more actively choose to engage in this mutual flow of energy and take ownership of what we are sending out. We can grow in our perception and participation in this collective space.

When we choose to enter into this space in the flow of love, we are cultivating the experience of our mystical communion.

This is actively embodying the body of Christ, partaking in communion in a mystical, participatory way. We are the body of God, all of us. And we can practice living into this reality through shared, communal engagement in what we call WeSpace.

If this experience sounds like something that you might want in your life, you are warmly invited to join a WeSpace group and begin practicing to give and receive in this way, to enter into the communion field. Enrollment is open now, and all are welcome to participate.

Of course “all of us” includes much more than just one group of people. It extends out to the unified field of everyone and everything. This is the third movement of Integral Prayer into God-Beyond-Us, into the transcendence and immanence of all things, which we’ll explore next week.



Praying Into All of Unified Reality

Whole-Body Transcendence into God-Beyond-Us



'Your life is now hidden with Christ in God' Colossians 3:3 - Artwork by Chris Powers

Integral Prayer – Part 8 by Luke Healy

In the third movement of Integral Prayer, we are addressing the 3rd person, infinite face of God-Beyond-Us. This is not the remote “God in the sky” who is unreachable and inaccessible, but rather the great Mystery who is always beckoning us onward, who is inviting us into the participation beyond the usual boundaries that we experience within the confines of our small self.

We don't pray at this distant God, but rather we move *into* the Mystery in all its facets of reality. This is not an act of moving out of ourselves, because we are a part of that reality. Rather, it is to expand beyond while still being rooted to our own fullness. It is not separate from our being.

Praying into unified reality is a movement of holistic transcendence. We can experience it in each of the four centers, each in its own unique form—and each providing a crucial element to the fullness of an embodied expansion into the all.

Sometimes transcendence gets a bad rap because it is seen as an act of escapism and disassociation. While this can be true of less healthy forms, holistic transcendence into all reality will actually be a movement of much greater connection, much greater presence, and much deeper being. It is, in many ways, an immanent transcendence.

As much or more than ever, today we are so often experiencing constriction and enclosure in our lives. You may even feel this contraction in your body, perhaps in your chest or gut.

Praying into unified reality opens us from our constricted self-sense and into the freedom and joy of the expanse of the mystery beyond ourselves. The mystery of embracing all, embodying all, being all, and going beyond all.

So let's go on that journey, let's explore a movement together into all of unified reality.

INTO THE UNIFIED FIELD

I open my shoulders. My chest stretches, and I feel the flow begin to stir. My radiant heart is there. Always there. But now I feel it again, the sting of bliss.

Open. The radiance emanates out beyond my body, free of its confines, into the natural flow. The light shines all around. The Sun in my chest, the Sun in yours.

A hand on my cheek.

The love expands. I feel it soaking over my surroundings, out and beyond, further and further. The love is everywhere, and I cannot see all it holds. In my radiant center the bliss burns to a finer and finer point. The deeper it centers, the more I sense its expanse. It feels almost as if it might crack for all that it holds.



It seeps into my heart around it. This immense care.

My arms outstretched, welcoming the universal communion, encompassing the eternal fire that burns in each one, *Embracing All*.

I feel my roots growing into the earth from my feet. My body grounding into the presence of my being here and now, in this moment, in this place, in this time. I am here.

And as my roots reach down further, they dissolve, permeating into the filaments of the earth and the matter of the cosmos. The energy of material substance shooting the circuits between the stars.

A blade of grass on my toe.

My cells tingle with the jolt of being in my bliss body. Deeper than the cells, I feel the quantum fibers of the great web in the multitudinous touch-points in every sinew of my self-form.

I am entangled in the wave-being of the body of God, the dance of nonlocality permeating among the incarnation of all things in the seamless materiality of all life. I am the one, and the one is me. *Embodying All.*

Centering into the core of my belly, I find myself being wrapped up in the gentle stillness, the warm embrace of the enfolding into my vital being. I am enveloped inside my spiritual womb.

And now a flow. A bubbling up from the deep source into a swirl of current. We are being made. Ever and again in this moment and the next. There are some with whom I'm sharing this womb. A spiritual family.

The sound of a small gurgle below.

The swirl reverses as I sink into the wellspring, into the darkness. In the primordial deep. The womb of eternity. The unification of all things in the common core of the before. The source oneness before form, before manifestation.

Before the great birth. The inbreath of infinity. The preconceived sparkle of I AM. *Being All.*

Shot out like a burst of the big bang, I leave my body and my being into the vast expanse beyond my mind. I am still rooted and grounded in the embodiment of myself and all. I am still centered in my being and the common core. I am still emanating and enfolding in the radiance of the universal embrace. And I am beyond.

But not me. The eye of the I. The great seer of awareness itself. Pure Consciousness from the formless beyond, perceiving the infinite eternity of all. The great cosmic witness, *Beyond All.*

There is nothing to say, nothing to do, nothing to be. All is well. All is already. Boundless release in the bliss of emptiness, the ultimate freedom of the beyond.

A flash of lightning.

A return to being. A call to be. Given to this age. For such a time as this. The gift of *this*. *This* right here. *This* right now. All that you are and ever have been, now in this moment. As one.

As All.



In the Womb of Eternity by Dana Lynne Andersen



"Participation in the divine life, whereby each individual will find, by conscious union with a Supreme Personal Being, the consummation of [their] own personality." -Teilhard de Chardin

My experience here is just one expression of the movement into the all, into the embodied expanse of holistic transcendence into unified reality. While I discover many of these elements each time I move into this practice, some here are also emergent and surprising. It can and will look differently for you.

From our awakened consciousness, we give ourselves over to the release of our expanded being, into the wholeness of that which we are. We let our center of awareness flow beyond our individual self, beyond our normal confines and limitations of our body, our sphere of care, our sense of identity, and our singular perspective.

We can do this from each of our centers to get a sense of the multiplicity of the dynamics of unified reality, as paradoxical as that may sound. It is one reality, one unified Mystery the Ultimate Reality, the infinite face of God-Beyond-Us.

And there are many doors.

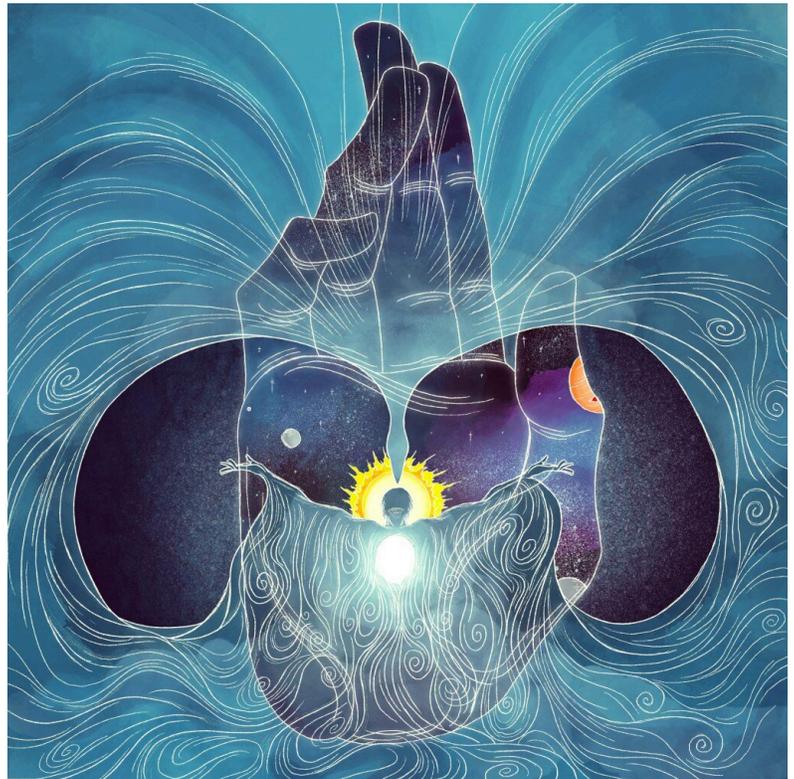
You don't have to do them all at once or all together. You can enter through any door you are being invited into.

When we enter the all—especially through the heart—you may find in your experience that it brings before you not just the bliss, but the pain of the suffering of the world. This is part of the bliss. Another paradox for us to welcome.

As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "Transcendence transfigures; it does not reconcile, but rather transmutes opposites into something surpassing them that effaces their oppositions."

We are not separate from the earth. We are not separate from all material reality, the whole cosmos. We are not separate from the unified reality of all.

We are one. We are all.



*"In Remote Eons I was shaped, at the start of the first things of the earth." Proverbs 8:23 -
Artwork by Chris Powers*

How Do Mystics Pray?

The Flowing Dance of Integral Prayer



The Dance by Rassoulli

Integral Prayer Part 9 – by Luke Healy

There was a time where I pretty much stopped praying altogether. The old ways and forms of prayer that I had done in my life just didn't seem to fit anymore. I turned to meditation as my more primary form of spiritual practice and took refuge in the silence.

It's not as if God was absent in this form. Nor were the exercises without their effects and value. In fact, I loved the silence. I found it so refreshing.

But part of me missed something, or perhaps, someone. I knew that God was in the silence, but was that the only place? Was this the only path to divine participation? Was it all about development of awareness and perception in my own individual spiritual training? And was God still an accessible, personal presence?

Both prayer and meditation are vital to our spiritual path, but like most conceptions that serve us, they really blossom when they open up to the wider expanse of possibility in the evolving unfolding of inclusivity and complexity. This is the integrative path, welcoming a freedom of movements through a broad range of potential expression.

This is prayer as a mystical dance with the divine.

You can dance with a few fundamental, basic steps, but you'll flourish into the flair and flow of a beautiful, joyful dance when the whole repertoire of movement is available to you, even including a few surprising turns and improvisations.

LEARNING TO DANCE IN PRAYER

In this series, we've been looking at all the different parts of Integral Prayer and exploring the unique dynamics of each separate aspect. But the experiential reality of the mystical dance of embodied, awakened prayer is very often much more the experience of the inter-dynamic flow of the four centers and the Three Faces of God.

When we're learning to dance, we have to slowly focus on each of the different steps. It can even be a little awkward at first for our body to get the feel for it. As we learn more steps, we begin to put them together to experience no longer just movements, but a dance.



First Steps

And it's ok to start by practicing the steps. In fact, that's the best way to learn. Differentiation precedes integration.

Then the more we practice, the more our feet, hips, arms, and whole body feel comfortable working together in the flow of cohesive and vibrant rhythm. So too with our four centers: heart, feet, spiritual womb, and head and three movements: *into, with, and from*.

Let us not forget: the point of the practicing is to be able to get out on the dance floor.

So how do we begin to put it all together? How do we find our combination of movements that become our own creative expression of the dance of mystical prayer?

I'm not much of an actual dancer myself, though I love to get out on the dance floor with my wife. It's not about what I look like to others, but the internal feel and inner experience of joy and freedom. And of course, the unifying experience of sharing that energy and expression with others.

PERSONAL EXPRESSION

We don't have to learn every dance but can gravitate toward the one that is singing to our soul at the moment.

This is the element of personal expression in our mystical prayer.



Perhaps you're feeling drawn to your spiritual womb and need simply to remain in the embrace of generative holding. Or maybe today you're feeling the pull of transcendence into the unitive embodiment of the great web. Or you want to simply rest in the loving heart space with Jesus.

All of these are possible and accessible. This freedom of movement brings an element of joy in the welcoming of a broad field. It gives us the ability to trust our own deepest intuitions about what is necessary for the moment, and where we are being called to focus. This is not giving ourselves over to the whims of our feelings or passing inclinations, but a trust in our inner compass to navigate better than locking ourselves into a narrow practice of a particular set of prescribed rituals.

There is great freedom in this flow of possibility to meet the needs of the moment, while still keeping in mind the benefit of healthy boundaries and commitment. Every dance still has its rules that make it what it is—while skilled dancers are still encouraged to break them from time to time, in the right ways. And sometimes, we do need to commit ourselves to a regularity of a specific form.

Especially for our individual practice, guided meditations can help us move into the experience of the movements, but we discover personal expression more by following the intuitive drawing of our spirit toward a pace of presence and movements in tune with our spirit consciousness in the moment.

But we don't want to just be flailing our arms wildly. That is not a dance. Well, it can be your dance, I suppose. But especially as we move into collective expression, we tune more into the flow that is not just internal, but weaving and twirling among us.

COLLECTIVE EXPRESSION

While it's nice to dance alone in your house sometimes, it's way more fun to join a group and engage in the collective energy and movement of one another. To take hands and join in the circle, into the larger flow.

Participating together with others also helps us get into the rhythm and energy of mystical movement better, just like dancing with a group encourages us to let loose a little more. We are heartened and emboldened by the collective, finding ourselves drawn into the field a little more easily.

In mystical prayer, this can often be the experience of participating in communion, a sharing in the intersubjective field in a way that unites us together with one another and with divine presence.

It can be a celebration and highlighting of each one in



Circle Dance

the dance, moving into the center not for attention, but for the focusing of energy and love into one another. This is a sort of interprayer that brings the relational connection and communication elements of prayer beyond the individual interior, and into the We.

This shared “We” helps bring our experience and understand of God out from beyond our own separate, individual perceptions. Just as when we spend time with a good friend among a group of others, we learn something new about that person through their eyes and see new aspects and expressions come forth from our friend in different ways.

Mystical prayer in collective expression can also at times flow into an experience of interbeing, a dissolving of the sense of our separate selves. Instead, discovering movements and expressions in sync with the field, in tune with the larger current somehow moving into and through the all.

These forms of collective expression are different from just practicing alongside others, where everyone is essentially doing their own thing internally. Sometimes we need the weight room to build up our strength, but dancing together is always more fun—and often just as good of a workout!

When we enter into a dance with others, it’s best to have a similar framework, to come in with the expectation that we’re all doing the same dance—even if we have different movements in the expression. This creates the coherence to have a truly shared and communal mystical prayer.

LIBERATION INTO THE INTER-DYNAMIC FLOW

Our framework of the four centers and the three movements provide a helpful framework for the dance, but it is not the definitive or only formulation for moving into the dance of mystical prayer. By no means.

We offer these centers and movements as a broad field of possibility, with the centers including different types of mysticism and allowing for the various movements in encountering each of the Three Faces of God.

We believe it strikes a good balance between a field broad enough to encompass a healthy range of polarities, while still within a unified and accessible container.

But perhaps it can all still seem a little overwhelming, a little too much to grasp, or that it’s too hard to learn it all. That’s ok. Or maybe we find ourselves unsure exactly where to start.

The beauty of Integral Prayer is that we are able to give ourselves over to the dance, to allow ourselves to be the one being led. We don’t have to control the movements and the flow of the dance. Even as we are given freedom of expression and very much our own contribution in participation, we are carried along by the leading hand of the divine, emerging and arising into the delightfully unexpected and unforeseen dips and turns, into the joy of the dance.

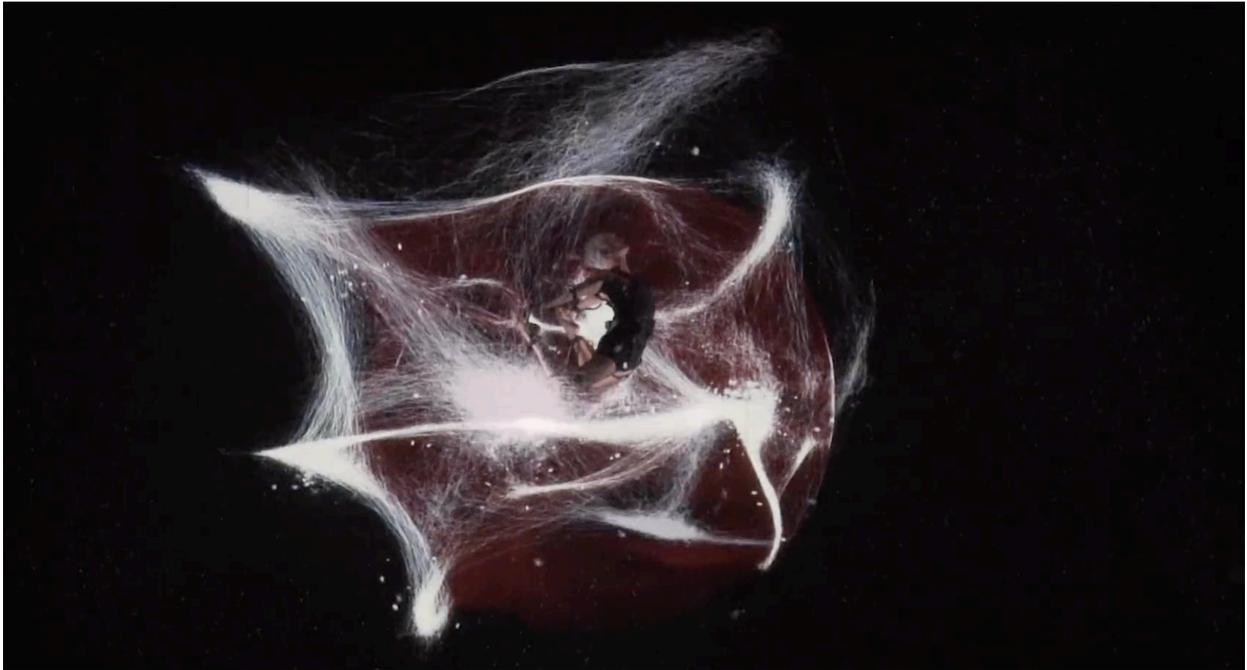


Liberation by Stefan Duncan

How do mystics pray?

By taking the hand of God—the God-Beyond-Us, the God-Beside-Us, the God-Being-Us—and giving themselves over to the freedom of being led in the Grand Dance.

Have fun!



'Into the Flow' by Dökk by fuse' Studio

Integral Christian Network – is co-founded by Paul Smith and Luke Healy. They are also the creators of the WeSpace Whole Body Mystical Awakening Practice. Learn more at integralchristiannetwork.org

