

Be Still and Know: A Contemplative Approach to Faith Formation

Session 2

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Contemplative Practice #1: Beginning Well

- **Example:** An opening ritual with Taize prayer
- **Explanation:** God is present to us *here and now*, but often we are not present. These practices help us to arrive mentally.
- **Other related practices:**
 - prayer of the heart, silent prayer, or guided meditation
 - Eucharistic adoration
 - reflection and writing
 - reflecting on music (Christian or popular)
 - hospitality (greeting by name, checking in, offering refreshment)

Resources:

- Taize YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/taize>
- Hallow prayer app: <https://hallow.com/>
- Gregory and Barbara Bottaro, *Sitting Like a Saint: Catholic Mindfulness for Kids*

Review

- We all yearn for peace, communion, and fulfillment.
- We realize these most fully in communion with Jesus, and that is the aim of catechesis and all the Church's ministry.
- The Christian contemplative tradition offers tried and true guidance for deepening our relationship with Christ.
- And yet we find this work challenging.
- It requires opening a space for and trusting God.
- It happens through relationships.

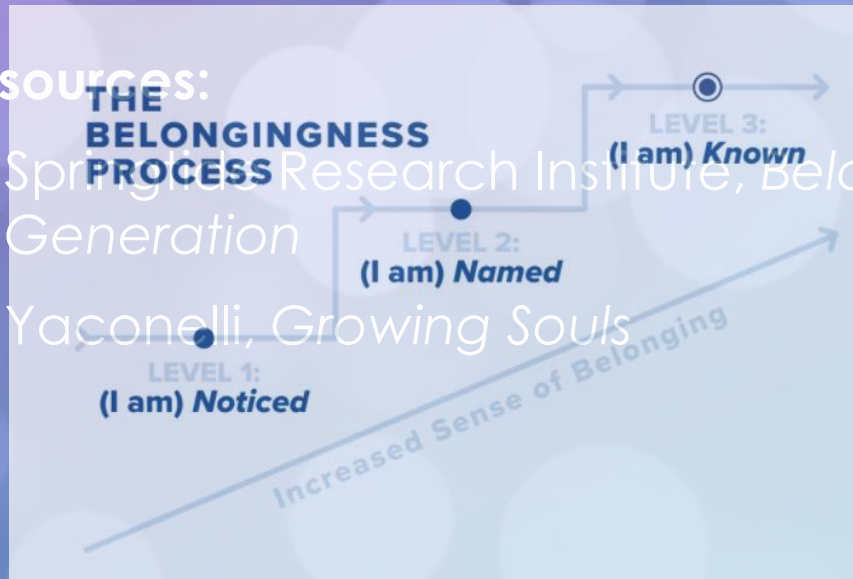
Practice #2: Cultivating Community

Explanation: Our deepest desire to be known and loved. This is the foundation and medium for everything else.

Practices: Personal invitation, address people by name, ask about their lives and loved ones, listen attentively and non-judgmentally, pray and serve together, come to each other's aid

Resources:

- Springtide Research Institute, *Belonging: Reconnecting America's Loneliest Generation*
- Yaconelli, *Growing Souls*



Practice #3: Beholding Beauty

- **Example:** Beholding God's creation
- **Explanation:** Beauty arrests us, draws us out of ourselves, and lifts up our hearts and minds.
- **Other related practices:**
 - *Visio divina* with icons and artwork
 - Listening to music

Resource:

- Rowan Williams, *The Dwelling of the Light: Praying with Icons of Christ* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2003).

Practice #4: Lectio Divina

- **Steps:** (1) lectio, (2) meditatio, (3) oratio, (4) contemplation
- **Explanation:** Prayerful reading of texts expands our attention and moves us from the head to the heart.
- **Other related practices:**
 - slow reading
 - composition of place (i.e., imaginative reading)
 - Storytelling

Resource:

- Guide to lectio divina:
<https://saintandrewsabbey.com/homily/accepting-the-embrace-of-god-the-ancient-art-of-lectio-divina/>

General Guidance

1. Be prepared for what might surface when you go deep.
2. Not all that passes for “contemplative” is Christian.
3. It’s more about creating a contemplative community than simply using contemplative activities.

Resources:

- Catholic resources on youth mental health: <https://nfcym.org/resources/topics/mental-health/>
- Archdiocese of Newark mental health ministry training: <https://www.rcan.org/mental-health-ministry>
- Sofia Carozza, “Catholic Schools and the Values of Mindfulness,” *Church Life Journal*, <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/mindfulness-is-not-value-free/>.

Practice #5: Ending Well

- **Example:** Ignatian examen
- **Explanation:** We're prone to rushing off without processing what has happened. It's good to give thanks.
- **Other related practices:**
 - Closing prayer or ritual
 - Song
 - Discernment (individual and group)

Resources:

- Guide to the examen:
<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>
- Liturgy for discernment: Yaconelli, *Growing Souls*

Resources

General:

- ▶ Mark Yaconelli, *Growing Souls: Experiments in Contemplative Youth Ministry* (Zondervan, 2007).
- ▶ Springtide Research Institute: <https://www.springtideresearch.org/>
- ▶ Teaching resources from Dr. Patrick Manning: <https://blogs.shu.edu/patrickmanning/>
- ▶ Resources on faith and mental health: <https://www.newarkoym.com/alightinthedarkness>

On contemplative prayer

- ▶ For beginners: Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land* (Oxford University Press,).
- ▶ Intermediate: Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* ().
- ▶ Advanced: Thomas Dubay, *Fire Within: St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and the Gospel* (Ignatius Press, 1989).

Thank You

Email me at **manninpa@shu.edu** with follow-up questions or to request a presentation or workshop.