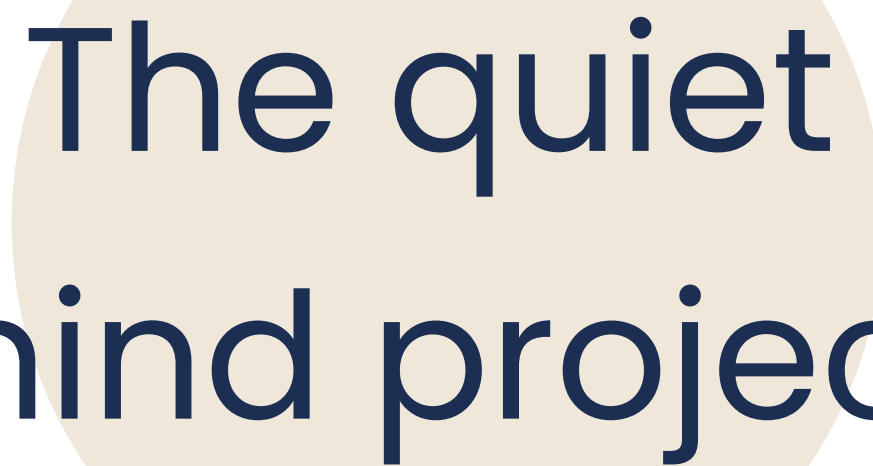




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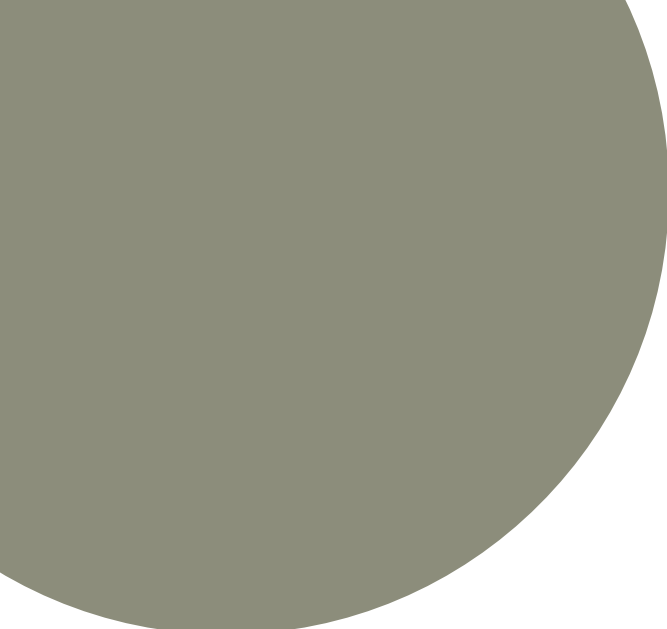


# The quiet mind project

**A guide to  
developing  
Christian  
meditation**

Ancient Wisdom in  
Common Settings






The outer self is the swinging door; the inner self is the still hinge  
What we plant in the soil of contemplation, we shall reap in the harvest of action.

Meister Eckhart

But the silence in the mind  
is when we live best, within  
listening distance of the silence  
we call God. This is the deep  
calling to deep of the psalm-  
writer, the bottomless ocean.  
We launch the armada of  
our thoughts on, never arriving.  
It is a presence, then,  
whose margins are our margins;  
that calls us out over our  
own fathoms. What to do  
but draw a little nearer to  
such ubiquity by remaining still?

R.S. Thomas





# What is the quiet mind project?

The Quiet Mind Project seeks to communicate the essentials of Christian meditation and to encourage the practice of this ancient tradition.

The project assumes that meditation is simple and natural. The skills and techniques employed by the Christian meditator are of value to anyone seeking to live an integrated life.

## **The Practice**

The Quiet Mind Project suggests that a period of silence – when the mind and the body are still – is important for every person, every day. By adopting the QMP schools will seek to bring opportunities for disciplined stillness to everyone in the school community. It is crucial to engage mind and body to meditate.

*This booklet is based on the work of  
Anthony Finnerty RIP*



# The 4 steps

*It is good to have a specific amount of time given to the meditation and so someone must signal the beginning and end of the period of stillness. Everyone involved should be aware of how long the period will be and how the end will be signalled. It is better to start with small drops and the thirst to be cultivated than to provide a flood and risk participants being overwhelmed or discouraged.*

1. Your body should be at rest, but not in the position for sleep. It is good to have a straight back. Sitting cross-legged is suitable for some people, but not for all. Most of us will sit on a chair, with both feet on the ground and with hands resting in our lap.
2. Regular, unforced breathing is best. Once you are in an appropriate sitting position let your breath assume its natural rhythm. Try to allow the muscles in your neck and shoulders to relax.
3. Within your own mind silently recite a chosen word or phrase, for instance: **Be still**. These two syllables will aid concentration and will conform to your gentle breathing. This phrase is sometimes known as the mantra or prayer word.
4. Most people will close their eyes for the period of meditation. If this is difficult you should have something upon which you can fix your eyes to help you focus and to avoid distracting others. A card with the mantra – **Be still** written on it, or a candle might help. It is important to be still.

# How?

The way in which the QMP is brought into a school or community will vary but some elements are key to its success. First of all, it is crucial that there is a small group of individuals who are convinced of the value and legitimacy of Christian meditation. The project must have the support of senior leaders and there must be a context in which the regular practice of periods of silence is realistic. Without these elements the project will fail.

# Why?

We have to be very wary of looking for specific outcomes from the meditative practice. A period of stillness is a healthy discipline for anyone and can help each of us as we cope with frenetic lives, but it has no magic power to take away problems. It allows us to lay problems to one side for a moment and maybe come back to them with a refreshed perspective. In the Christian tradition, the silence within gives space for real prayer to happen. Indeed, we may choose to close the period of stillness with a short prayer spoken out loud. The reason for engaging with the Quiet Mind Project is primarily because we believe it is good to be still in mind and body for a short period every day. If there are fruits to the practice in terms of individuals being relaxed and more tranquil, this is a blessing. So too is the way in which this practice can assist emotional maturation. Some studies suggest that advanced meditators increase their capacity for learning and for positive interaction. The QMP believes that stillness of the mind is a good thing in itself, and that is sufficient reason to practice meditation.




# When and Where?

The Quiet Mind Project must be adapted to the circumstances of the school or community seeking to put it into practice. A straightforward pattern would be to build up a small group of meditators (a group made up of staff and students), who want to develop their own practice and who are willing to communicate it to others. These need some instruction, some formation, and some encouragement.

The process is best to be unhurried and shared. If one individual seeks to bring this way of stillness to everyone within a few weeks it will be overly dependent upon that individual and is likely not to take root in the community.

It is helpful to schedule a regular period of time during the week for meditation. It assists in the sense of rhythm and ordinariness. If there is a place set aside for meditation (a chapel for instance) this too is very helpful and the space must be arranged to assist the meditators. But meditation should not be restricted to one location or time. Groups of meditators should practice in classrooms so that the periods of stillness can be easily integrated into the routine of the school'



# What about prayer?

Stilling the mind and using meditation does not require any requirement to believe in God. It does provide a good basis for prayer. Prayer has a myriad of forms and there is a place for rituals and for set prayers for shared use. However, prayer can also be very simple. Three phrases provide all that is needed:

***Be still***

***Be grateful***

***Be compassionate***

Prayer is part of human life. It is natural. It is normal. It is healthy. But it does require effort, it demands thought and a gentle discipline.

A good way to begin prayer is by being still – in body and in mind. It will be helpful to adopt a particular posture, usually with a straight spine and eyes closed. After a moment of simply being still then you might say ***Thank You***. It may be thanksgiving for something specific which you name in your own mind, but it may be a more general sense of gratitude. Internally saying the phrase 'Thank You' is enough. Thirdly, we must move prayer from ourselves to a wider compassion and so you might ask to have compassion for all you encounter in the day ahead.

Come, behold the works of the Lord;  
see what he has brought upon the world.  
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire  
. "Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth."  
The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psalm 46

# Questions & Clarifications

## **What The Quiet Mind Project is and is not:**

The Quiet Mind Project is a way of bringing Christian meditation into schools. There are numerous other methods and projects to encourage a quiet mind; there are some from a distinctly Buddhist tradition, some that are non-religious – all offering techniques that can be helpful but with a different focus and heritage. The QMP is more closely related to the work of the World Community for Christian Meditation and the Centering Prayer promoted by Fr Thomas Keating through the Contemplative Outreach organisation.

## **'Meditation'**

The word meditation is somewhat elastic, in that it can be stretch to cover many meanings. The word itself comes from the Latin word meditari which has a range of meanings including to reflect on, to study and to practice. We might readily meditate on a passage of scripture in the sense of think prayerfully about a passage. The Quiet Mind Project is simply encouraging the early stage of meditation – the stage of stilling the mind so that there is space to allow the work of the Spirit. A still mind can be a place in which the Word of God is contemplated and real prayer can arise.

## **Is meditation prayer?**

In Christian tradition real prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit and our role is to be open to God's action. The meditative skills described by the Quiet Mind Project lead to a greater possibility for openness to the Holy Spirit. This form of meditation can never be seen as a replacement for all other forms of prayer. Words, liturgy, art, music... all these make up the heritage of Christian prayer.

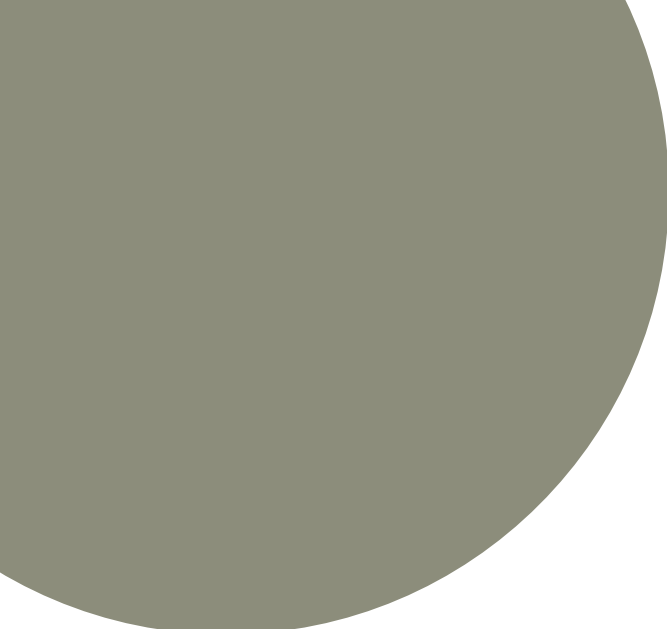
## **Is the Quiet Mind Project Christian?**

The Project draws from the ancient Christian contemplative tradition that is rooted in the Christian Scriptures and in the heritage of the Catholic Church. It is open to all who are open to it. There are underlying beliefs – in the goodness of each person created and loved by God, in the presence of Christ in each of us, and of the need for stillness in heart and mind to be open to the Holy Spirit. These underlying beliefs need not exclude people from different religious traditions or those who have no religious belief but do have a desire to live an authentic human life. The QMP is meant to serve all who seek honestly to engage with it. No religious community has a monopoly on silence; a quiet mind is a blessing for every human.

## **When do we know we have mastered meditation?**

Never. And mastery is not the aim. The aim is simply to practice, and to practice simply. We will always have distractions –which are neither good nor bad – and which will come and go. The QMP must not be a burden or a cause for anxiety. We do what we can, gently.





"I ask you to look into your hearts each day to find the source of all true love. Jesus is always there, quietly waiting for us to be still with him and to hear his voice. Deep within your heart, he is calling you to spend time with him in prayer. But this kind of prayer, real prayer, requires discipline; it requires making time for moments of silence every day. Often it means waiting for the Lord to speak. Even amid the "busy-ness" and the stress of our daily lives, we need to make space for silence, because it is in silence that we find God, and in silence that we discover our true self. And in discovering our true self, we discover the particular vocation which God has given us for the building up of his Church and the redemption of our world."

Pope Benedict XVI - The Big Assembly

