

# Christian Meditation at Holy Cross Parent Information February 2015

Christian Meditation is a way of becoming present to God and entering into the prayer of the heart.

Learning to pray means much more than memorizing prayers by rote, and/or learning the theory or doctrine of prayer. Christian meditation helps us enter in the actual experience of praying and enables us to fully attend to God while we pray.

Through repetition of the prayer word or mantra, ma-ra-na-tha, which means "Come Lord" or "Come Lord Jesus", we become present to God and experience God in the depths of our hearts.

It is a meaningful and authentic way to pray and helps children on their faith journey. Christian Meditation does not replace the Religious education lesson or other forms of prayer. It is one form of prayer and it is a discipline that requires practice, concentration and commitment.

## Benefits for Children and Adults

Meditation improves the ability to maintain single-focused attention, even in the face of internal and external distractions. This has implications for students with inattention challenges like ADHD.

Meditation can improve problem-solving and decision-making skills (e.g., issues from the playground between students are quickly diffused during meditation).

Meditation leads to increased self-knowledge and self-acceptance.

Meditation reduces stress and increases children's sense of wellbeing and harmony.

Meditation has been associated with a number of subjective psychological effects.


Regular meditators report some or all of the following:

- a boost in energy levels – an increase in productivity, creativity and physical stamina;
- increased self-acceptance and a gradual release from the tendency to attribute self blame;
- a greater ability to express emotions (both positive and negative);
- fewer bouts of irritability or emotional or behavioural outbursts; and/or
- an improved and expanded sense of identity.

The following two pages describe what Christian Meditation looks like, feels like and sounds like in an elementary school classroom.

If you have any further questions or thoughts on Christian Meditation please contact your classroom teacher. The full document that these excerpts were taken from will be posted as a link on the Holy Cross School web page.

Currently, Christian Meditation is regularly practiced at Holy Cross in grades ELKP – 1, 1, 5 and 6/7. Next school year, we anticipate all classrooms at Holy Cross to be regularly practicing Christian Meditation.

Sincerely,  
  
Mr. Chopp  
Principal  
Holy Cross School

## Christian Meditation with Children ...

Looks Like ...	Feels Like ...	Sounds Like ...
<p>Children and adults <u>sitting completely still gathered in a prayer circle or community</u> with their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eyes gently closed</li> <li>• backs straight</li> <li>• shoulders back</li> <li>• feet flat on the ground if using chairs or legs crossed if sitting on the floor</li> <li>• hands relaxed comfortably on lap with palms facing up or down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discipline</li> <li>• hard work to avoid distractions</li> <li>• lots of effort and hard work in the beginning, but an easy form of prayer with more practice</li> <li>• a special form of prayer</li> <li>• a special time with Jesus</li> <li>• calming to be in the presence of the Spirit and Christ</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Open Our Hearts</i> playing on a CD at the start and children joining in singing</li> <li>• a few deep breaths at the start</li> <li>• <u>continued silence</u> while repeating the mantra</li> <li>• '<i>ma-ra-na-tha</i>' in your mind</li> <li>• <i>We Call on You</i> playing on CD at the conclusion and children joining in singing</li> <li>• For some classes, there may be a soft singing of the songs at the start and conclusion</li> </ul>
DOES NOT Look Like...	DOES NOT Feel Like...	DOES NOT Sound Like...
<p>Children and adults <u>sitting around just anywhere</u> with their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eyes open</li> <li>• backs and shoulders slouched</li> <li>• heads down</li> <li>• arms or legs outstretched</li> <li>• hands fidgeting or playing with items that are distractions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a visualization of a beach or other scene</li> <li>• wasted time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• noises from movements and fidgeting</li> <li>• whispering voices or talking</li> <li>• continued loud deep breathing</li> <li>• throat-clearing noises</li> <li>• repetition of the mantra out loud</li> </ul>



## How to Do Christian Meditation

Meditation is not something we do solely in our head. It involves the whole person - body, mind and spirit. Meditation can be described as living in the present moment. It is only in the present moment that we can find what we are looking for. The only place we will find God is here and now. Meditation is letting go of the past and future and coming into the reality of the present moment that is also called the kingdom of God, which is within us. The Spirit prays within us, but we have to do our work.

We need to get rid of our distractions. The early Desert Fathers suggested you take a single word, a mantra, prayer word, sacred word. During meditation you repeat this word through the entire meditation, letting go of the past, future, and your imagination.

It is recommended to use "maranatha". It is the oldest Christian mantra. Say it in four syllables of equal length: ma-ra-na-tha. You say your word faithfully with attention and love. Saying it with attention means you are taking attention away from yourself.

The mind races from one thought to another. We meditate to calm the mind and to bring the mind into the heart. The real stillness is the stillness within. *(The above is adapted from a talk by Fr. Laurence Freeman, OSB.)*

1. Sit still and upright with your back straight. This helps you stay alert and awake.
2. Place both your feet flat on the floor.
3. Place your hands on your lap facing either upwards or downwards.
4. Close your eyes lightly.
5. Be aware of your normal breathing pattern for a minute or two as you relax.
6. Silently, interiorly, begin to say your single word.
7. Listen to the sound of your mantra as you say it, gently and continuously.
8. Do not think or imagine anything – spiritual or otherwise.
9. If thoughts and images come, these are distractions at the time of meditation; keep returning to simply saying the word.
10. Maintain this stillness for the entire period of the meditation.

*(Adapted from the Canadian Christian Meditation Community). <http://www.wccm-canada.ca/>)*

