

ARISE TODAY



Create the beautiful,
abundant life you desire.



THE **DEEPER CONNECTION**
WITH MARIA GULLO

I

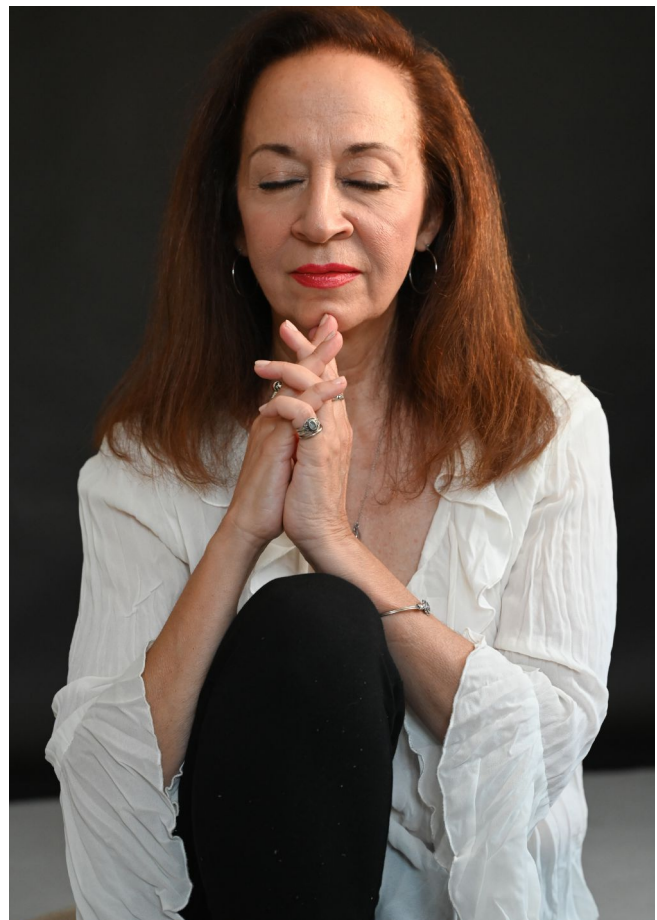
After all the seeking and struggling, trying to create a happy life of my own design, I can say with great conviction, that apart from God I can do nothing that will benefit me or my loved ones. It is only in God, with God and through God that I'm able to experience the beautiful life I've always known was possible. By making choices that actually brought me to the end of my self I've discovered that to create a beautiful life begins and ends with prayer and a relationship rooted and centered in the Living God.

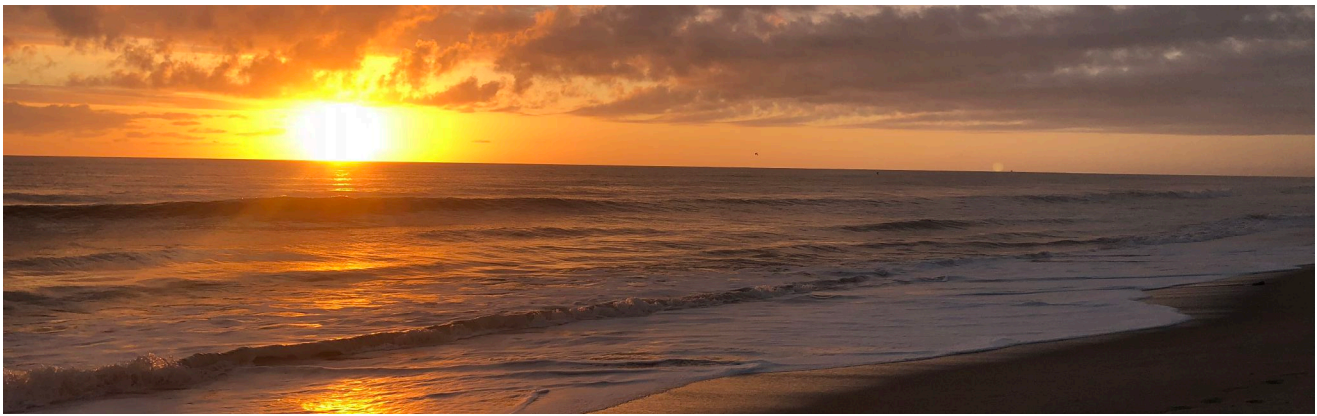
Welcome To Morning Prayer Time

Welcome and thank you for accepting my invitation to learn how you can start your day in prayer open and willing to connect with God and be 'present to the Presence'. I'm going to share with you 10 Moments of A Morning Prayer Time with details and resources for you to create your own.

I'm so happy and grateful you're here with me. It is time. This is the day given you to seek and live in God's Presence. To receive God's gifts, mercies and faithfulness, as they are brand new every morning. (Lam. 3:23)

My desire is to share with you the way I've found that helps me begin a day being 'present to the Presence', which translates into a day that I am more authentically connected to God, myself





and others. It doesn't make me immune to life's challenges with all of the ups and downs; however it does allow me to face my day centered in God which is a day that flows in peace, joy, love, freedom and clarity of thought. A day that doesn't begin with worry, stress or anxiety, rather one that begins with trust and faith. I am reminded I do not have to power through this life alone.

Before I share with you the 10 Moments of my Morning Prayer Time you have to promise me, but more importantly, promise yourself that you will work at getting really good at something. Something that's just as important as starting your day in prayer and that's forgiveness. I want you to become very comfortable with forgiving yourself especially when you miss your Morning Prayer. Even forgive yourself for not forgiving yourself. Why? Because this Contemplative Morning Prayer time is not about putting pressure on yourself to get it right or do it right. It's not about resolving to start everyday in prayer and meditation, with perfect attendance. It's not about more pressure. This only opens the door to self-critical thoughts when you miss a day or feel you didn't do it 'right'.

You're not going to tarnish your soul when you think you messed up. Let's get this straight right out of the gate. While you are a spiritual being on a human journey (as many wise teachers tell us) you are still human with all of your perfect imperfections, frailties, gifts, talents, wounds and challenges. There is no standard of perfection you need to live up to. So right now, repeat after me, "I forgive myself, for being hard on myself. I forgive myself for the times I will fall miss my Morning Prayer for whatever reason." Now give yourself and God a warm hug and a high five.

I have found my daily morning rhythm of self-care, Centering Prayer, reading and journal writing to be invaluable. Though I've been doing it for many years, at times, when the stuff of life imposes in on my morning, I describe myself as inconsistently consistent. I remain assured that

“This is the day given you to seek and live in God’s Presence. To receive God’s gifts, mercies and faithfulness, as they are brand new every morning.”

God creates a moment of grace, mercy and love regardless of whether I make it all happen or not.

Here’s the beauty of a shortened or missed Morning Prayer time. First, I feel the difference all day long. It feels like I missed my spiritual food and my soul is hungry. Or that I’m being tossed around on rough waters. Or I might simply feel a bit Homesick. Yet, the minute I sit in my ‘prayer chair’ and reconnect with my intention to be present to the Presence of God within, the waters calm and I’m Home once

more. The gift of a missed prayer time is the grace I feel when I’m back and the contrast I experience getting through a day without it.

We are on a journey of transformation from our Christ un-likeness to Christ like-ness. An adventure in contemplative spirituality that leads us to the Great Love we seek, into a deeper connection with God, ourselves and others. It is not a destination we will arrive at one day by following a spiritual compass or set of goals. This is about Love. Receiving the Love of God. It’s a process and a relationship. Yet, the discipline of daily prayer is invaluable and essential.

To say the quality of your life will depend on your Morning Prayer Time is an understatement. The fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit are the evidence of such prayerful commitment to God for your sake and the sake of others.

It is my desire and privilege to walk with you, support and guide you and most importantly pray with you through your contemplative journey of faith. Setting up a daily Morning Prayer Time might be one of the most important daily choices you could make. This ministry “The Deeper Connection” is committed to helping you create and sustain a rhythm of prayer and living, that will bring about the beautiful life of inner peace, love, joy and freedom you desire. Remember, when in doubt, this community and I am here for you. We are all in this together.

Whether you’ve had a morning devotional or Centering Prayer time or are just now embarking on this contemplative journey, matters not. As taught by our Buddhist brothers and sisters, we are all beginners, regardless of where we are on the spiritual continuum. We all, regardless of age, experience, education or background, are being transformed moment by moment from

our Christ un-likeness into Christ likeness. Deepening our relationship, learning how to love and be loved.

When incorporating a Morning Prayer Time into your day, consider your schedule and personal responsibilities. Ideally, first thing in the morning before you kick into action is the best time. If you have young children or teenagers at home, your time may be very early or later morning after everyone is out of the house. If your children are older and self-sufficient, you can create a time around them. You may be retired with the freedom and flexibility to set up an undisturbed, daily time. Whatever your personal living situation is, I encourage you to carve out the time. Let consistency, commitment and discipline be your intention. God has already created the space for you otherwise you wouldn't be reading my words right now. "This feels impossible," you may be thinking. Well, cast that thought into the sea of forgetfulness, for with God all things are possible.

You have been chosen by God to embark on or deepen your contemplative Christian journey and to deepen your relationship with the Great Divine Mystery of our Triune God. God is journeying with you and will show you the time and resources available to help you live and walk with God on this contemplative journey. Your work is to show up and keep showing up, to keep moving forward and 'stay the course'.

That's why I'm here. This work, The Deeper Connection, is for you and will help you return and remain, day after day. To help you follow your heart's desire. To help you grow in an authentic, intimate connection with the only Power that can truly heal and transform your life for good. Remember, you're not alone.

"To say the quality of your life will depend on your Morning Prayer Time is an understatement. The fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit are the evidence of such prayerful commitment."

We're in this together. It is time.

Moment 1: Smile Yourself Awake

1 minute, You can do it!

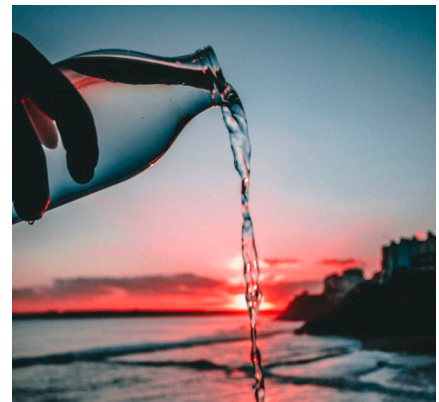
It truly makes a difference. There have been numerous scientific neurological studies on the brain's response to simply smiling. It matters and it makes a big difference in how you feel. Did you know the simple act of smiling releases the feel good neurotransmitters? Therefore, when you smile first thing in the morning your brain begins to release dopamine, endorphins and serotonin. So choose to create a genuine full out, life is so stinkin' good smile and your body, heart and soul will respond joyfully. Yes, there are disconcerting things happening in the world. There may be some heavy things going on in your personal life. However, when you're able to smile and let gratitude to God for waking up, be your first thought, even the most challenging situations will feel differently. Gratitude to God for simply being and breathing will bless your soul and everyone else. Try it everyday for 2 weeks and notice how your life changes.

Moment 2: Hydrate with good water

1 minute, Hydrate your brain and your body.

I like to keep fresh, filtered water in a water bottle on my night stand. Preferable a glass bottle is best or SPA free water bottle. There are so many reasons to drink water first thing in the morning. You begin to rehydrate, flush toxins, improve circulation, improve digestion and the list goes on and on.

Bottom line is drinking at least 8 ounces of room temperature water is a great way to start hydrating and waking up your body. Keep a bottle on your night stand and drink it before you even get out of bed.



Moment 3: Move Gently

2-5 minutes, Get your blood flowing.

Start off the day with gentle movement. Even if you're used to exercise or not, move your body very gently. Slow, easy stretching is a good way to get your circulation going. While you're still in bed, if your physical state allows, just bend your knees up to your chest and hold them. Then

extend and lower one leg at a time, then switch legs. Sit on the side of your bed and do some arm and upper body stretches, reaching up and out. Then stand and continue the same. Raise your arms above your head and stretch them out wide, circling out to the sides, down and up again. Slowly march in place (like when you were a child). Whatever feels good, just get your body moving. Of course, there's so much more you could do, but this is simply to get your body breathing and blood flowing to start your day.

Moment 4: Recite or listen to a prayer

2-4 minutes, Hear the words of the Spirit.

I recommend using one of my prayer tracks either downloaded from my website any of your devices or on Insight Timer mobile meditation app. I've created several helpful audio prayer tracks on Insight Timer mobile meditation app. Listen by taking in word by word, phrase by phrase. You never know how the Holy Spirit will get your attention and stir your soul. Listen as you're stretching or doing your gentle body movements. Give voice to your gratitude and recite the prayer as you continue to awaken your brain, body and spirit. I especially recommend St. Patrick's Prayer, 'I Arise Today'. After using this one every day for 2 weeks or more, it will start to form in you and the words will minister to you throughout the day.

Moment 5: Self-care

2-3 minutes, Awaken your digestion gently.

If you prefer to have a hot drink to begin your day I recommend drinking a cup of hot water or tea with fresh lemon juice, and a touch of organic raw honey. Adding fresh cut ginger and/or powdered collagen is always helpful for your digestion. If you're a coffee drinker, I recommend drinking it after your Morning Prayer. However, you do what feels best for you.

Moment 6: Sacred Space

1 minute, Create your intention.

Sit in your personal 'sacred space'. Find a place in your home designated as your 'sacred prayer space'. It could be a corner in your bedroom (which is where mine is), or in a separate room.

Wherever it is, personalize and make it your space. Keep it simple. You might have a place for your books, journal, candle and anything else that might be meaningful for you. Whether a small corner or an entire room this is your place of prayer and meditation. Eventually your family, etc. will know when you're in your 'sacred prayer space' you're not to be disturbed unless the house is on fire.

Moment 7: Spiritual Reading

5-7 minutes, Turn your thoughts toward God.

Read a book that will help focus your thinking. Along with the bible, you may have a favorite spiritual reading that helps draw your attention toward prayer. I've created a list of resources with books I use and recommend. Keep other reading for study after your Centering Prayer time or later the day. At this point you don't want to engage the mind with a lot of thinking, just enough that helps you to establish your intention to connect deeply with the Presence of God.

Moment 8: Centering Prayer

20 minutes, Resting in God.

Now you're ready for your Centering Prayer time. (20-30 minutes) If you have a smartphone or tablet, I recommend using Insight Timer mobile app. You have a couple of options. You could use my Centering Prayer track that will guide you into your prayer time and lead you out, after 20 minutes of silence. With the guided lead-in and ending it is 31 minutes. Or you could use the time mode on Insight Timer and set it for 20 minutes. A chime will start and end your prayer time. In addition I created a Centering Prayer cd "It Is Time" (available on my website) if you prefer having the flexibility to use the different tracks. After your Centering Prayer time sit for a couple more minutes bringing to mind the people you'd like to hold in the Light of Christ. This would be a brief time of intercessory prayer. Keep in mind during Centering Prayer you are already holding love for everyone in your life.

Moment 9: Journal

2 - 5 minutes, From heart and mind to paper.



This is a good time to journal whatever is stirring in you. (5-10 minutes) Writing down your feelings, thoughts, ideas and internal movements after your prayer time is a really good idea. You may think you'll remember, but soon after the day begins, it's easy for those thoughts to get lost. A couple sentences is often all it takes to express the Holy Spirit stirring within you. Then choose one word or phrase that is especially

'speaking to you' and put it in your heart pocket to take with you into your day. Throughout the day recall those words and let them minister to you as only the Holy Spirit can make happen.

Moment 10: Walk With God

2 minutes, Receive, believe, and live.

What is your intention for your day? God works through the desires of your heart. God has placed those desires in you and God can bring them to fruition. You need to first recognize them and set your intention and attention on them. Be specific and ask God for the grace you need. Are you facing a difficult meeting, event or situation? Do you simply have to pay your bills? Do you need energy to help you exercise or make a change? Whatever the day holds, it matters and living it intentionally being present to the Presence of God will change everything for your highest good.

In Conclusion, Things To Be Aware Of

As soon as you go to sit down for your Morning Prayer, you will be pulled in other directions. Simple thoughts like, “Did I turn off the stove?” (even though you know did), “I wonder if I got



that email I’ve been expecting?”, “What am I doing here anyway?”, “I’m not good at this at all.”, “Is anything really happening?”. The list goes on and on. Simply follow your intention regardless of the battle in your mind and let yourself move into the Stillness. Just as in Centering Prayer don’t engage these thoughts. Don’t argue or debate with them. Remember the rules of engagement: simple notice but don’t listen, don’t answer, don’t repeat. You will come to love your Morning Prayer

and will become very protective of it. It is your one on one time with the Lover of your soul, the one and only relationship that will transform your life.

The word that sounds and feels innocent enough, but will literally derail your Morning Prayer and therefore your day is, LATER. Yes, that simple. If you put off your Morning Prayer, chances are you won’t get to it at all that day. At a Contemplative Outreach International Conference I attended some years ago, speaker after speaker explained in great detail the results of their clinical studies on the impact that Centering Prayer had on the lives the participants. By the end of the conference there was one final statement that summed up all of the research, “Bottom line is your life depends on it.”

Tips

- Please, please, please DO NOT pick up your phone (unless using it as a timer) or turn on any music, TV or computer. Leave your emails and to do list for later.
- Even after your Morning Prayer, I recommend keeping your TV off. Filling your mind with the negative news or other people's agenda can be very imposing. Become comfortable with silence as your backdrop to the point of not having to fill it with music, TV, computers, etc.
- Make sure the temperature of your room is comfortable.
- Turn off the volume on your phone immediately at the beginning of your Morning Prayer.
- If you feel you'd like to do intercessory prayer, keep it simple without a lot of words. Usually only mentioning the person's name and holding them in the Silence for a brief time. God already knows what is needed. Consider it an opportunity for you to extend your love to those who are on your heart.
- You may have to get up earlier (and/or go to bed earlier) but I can assure you, the life-changing benefits will be reason enough to change your sleep times.

Resources

Transform Your Life Through Centering Prayer audio course by Maria Gullo

Open Mind, Open Heart by Father Thomas Keating

The Human Condition by Father Thomas Keating

Invitation To Love by Father Thomas Keating

Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening by Cynthia Bourgeault

The Heart of Centering Prayer by Cynthia Bourgeault

The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living compiled writings of Fr Keating

The Language of Letting Go by Melody Beatty

Love Poems from God by Daniel Ladinsky

Insight Timer mobile app on phone or tablet

A notebook or journal

Favorite pen and highlighter

Candle

Any picture, icon, little statue, image that carries a deep meaning. For example, I have a small wooden bowl of important items that hold special meaning to me.

Our Community

It is such a pleasure to have you as part of The Deeper Connection Community. My prayerful intention is that you will come to fall in love more deeply with the One and only One who Loves you beyond anything you can imagine.

As you continue your contemplative journey of following Christ and deepening your relationship with the Living God, no doubt questions even challenges will arise. If you would like more information about Spiritual Direction, don't hesitate to email me through my website <https://www.thedeeperconnection.org>. Join The Deeper Connection Contemplative Community our private group on Facebook and attend our Zoom Contemplative Prayer Gatherings and Zoom Centering Prayer Meetings.



For more information, contact us through:
<https://www.thedeeperconnection.org>

Copyright © 2020 by Maria Gullo, All Rights Reserved.

Reuse of this material in any form other than by the author is expressly prohibited.

Version 1.1 – September 2020