

All of us pray in different ways at different stages in our lives. Sometimes our way of praying changes as we grow in our relationship with God.

Silence as a discipline is at the heart of all prayer. It plays an essential part in the process and development of spiritual growth throughout the history of the Church. In the 3rd and 4th centuries, the Desert Fathers and Mothers went out to the desert to find silence and solitude and later the discipline of silence and solitude became an essential part of the daily routine in the monastic life. Today, many retreat houses offer people a place where they can explore and experience the value of solitude and silence. It is, however, important to remember that silence and solitude in this context are not ends in themselves but a means to building and deepening our relationship with God.

Book suggestions

Laird, Martin (2006) *Into a Silent Land – The Practice of Contemplation*. Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd.

O'Rourke, Benignus (2010) *Finding your Hidden Treasure – The Way of Silent Prayer*. Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd.

Retreat Association Leaflets Number 3, *Time to be*, and 17 *Finding Silence and Stillness*. Downloadable from the Retreat Association website.

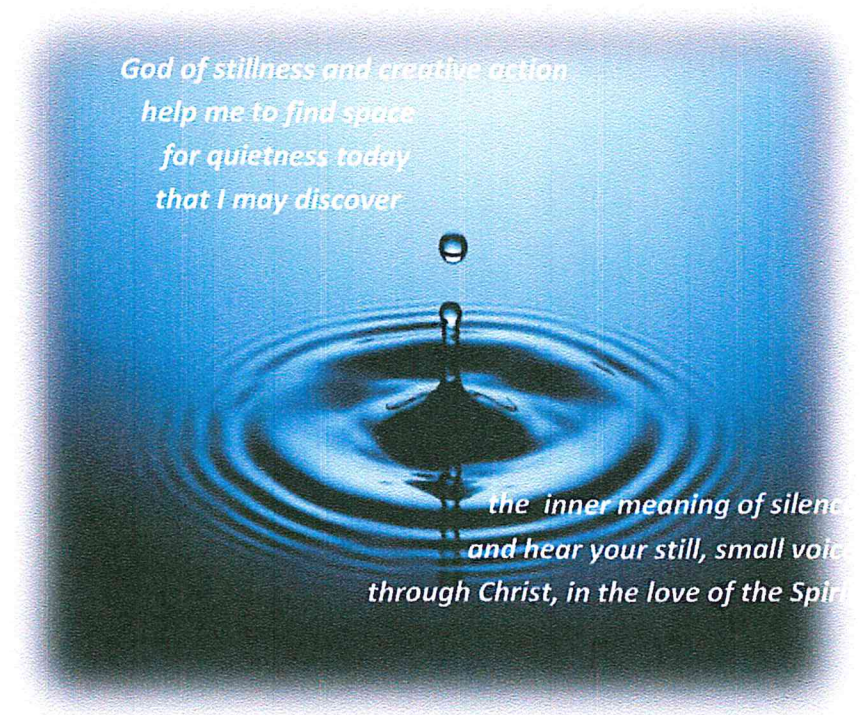
Skinner, John (2004) *Sounding the Silence*, Gracewing Publishers.

Websites

www.retreats.org.uk

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Listening to God in silence and stillness



The Prayer Pack



It is in silence and stillness that we may 'hear' God with inner ears:

"Be still and know that I am God" Psalm 46:10

Blocking out all sounds and activity in this fast-paced, noisy world can be a challenge. But the following steps can help you to relax and focus on that silence within.

You can do this whenever and where ever - even if you only have a few minutes! Allow yourself to gently get into it, eventually spending longer periods in silence.

First, get into a **comfortable position**.

Focus on your body: Starting at the top of your head, work your way down, closing your eyes, relaxing your facial muscles, your shoulders, then your torso, your arms, hands, legs and feet, right down to your toes.

Now **listen to the sounds** around you. Don't try to block them out, just acknowledge them, remembering God's presence in them: in the people and activities they stem from.

Remember God's presence in you, in your body and in your feelings, and remember that you are loved.

Become aware of **your breathing**, and pay attention to each breath without altering it – in and out, in and out.

Remember **God's presence** in your breathing.

As you breathe in, accept God's love and life; as you breathe out, let go of anything that is worrying or distracting you, placing it in God's hands.

**In me, O God, You live and move and have your being.
In You, O God, I live and move and have my being.**

