

Meditation Moments

During this busy time of year -- and what time isn't?! -- it may be helpful to have some meditation practices that can fit into the spaces of a full day. Here are practices that are inspired by *Openings: A Daybook of Saints, Psalms, and Prayer* by Larry James Peacock, a United Methodist minister and director of Rolling Ridge Retreat Center in Andover.

October 28

To celebrate the "saints" in your life, remember an important person to you every day by writing their names on slips of paper and then drawing a name (or sometimes an entire family) from a bowl to remember in prayer and thanksgiving throughout the day. This practice only takes a couple of minutes, as you reflect on the gifts you have received from each person; give thanks for him or her; and offer a blessing to that person and all persons. This can be as simple or elaborate (including playing music or lighting a candle) as you like, and can also be a family practice. It is a way to recognize that everything we do is with assistance from others, and to honor the foundation of love and guidance we have received from so many people.

November 4

This is a wonderful month to reflect on what you are grateful for. Perhaps you're familiar with the practice of keeping a gratitude journal or list. It is a way, every day, to focus on all the gifts we receive, often unconsciously. Write down a few things you're grateful for each day, including things as seemingly mundane as meeting a deadline easily or catching a glimpse of early dawn light -- anything you're thankful for qualifies! See where this practice leads you -- it may become a regular habit to spend a few minutes reflecting on the gifts of the day as a way to put all you've experienced into perspective.

November 11

Here's a warm-up for Thanksgiving Day: saying blessings throughout the day. You may already say a blessing before meals, but if not, you might try something that comes naturally from your heart, like "Thank you to all the people, plants, and animals who have provided this meal." When you have a little extra time, try thinking about what work took place to bring that meal to you, like the people who repair the machinery for the company that manufactured an egg carton or the workers who produced the ink that printed the label for a block of cheese. Extend a blessing to them, either in your mind or out loud. You can work with this practice wherever you go instead of (or in addition to) mealtimes. It's an easy way to feel connected to all of life in gratitude, and that can be a centering feeling.

November 18

This week try writing a poem or prayer of praise and blessing. It does not need to be long or complicated (unless you want it to be!). If you've never done this before, jot down the words or phrases that come to mind when you say to yourself, "I am thankful for..." Don't edit yourself, just write. From your list you'll see your own personal gratitude hymn emerge -- then you can edit it. Or, look at a poem, prayer, or hymn of praise that you love and borrow phrases from that, ordered however they mean the most to you. If you'd like, share your prayer at Thanksgiving, or read it to yourself that morning as a devotion --

whatever feels like the way you want to celebrate!

November 25

This week try offering a mental blessing to everyone you encounter, as much as is possible. This can be as literal as "peace be with you" said silently or a smile or sense of well-being. This is similar to a practice written about by a number of mindfulness meditation teachers. I have found it to be helpful in shifting from feeling irritated (especially in rush hour traffic!) to grateful. If only I could remember to practice it more often...! You might also try looking at the gratefulness.org website for other suggestions. The site includes a virtual labyrinth walk and candle meditation room that are good places to pause during a hectic day also.