“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus: Christ, though in the form of God,

did not deem equality with God as something to be clung to – but instead became completely empty and took on the image of oppressed humanity: born into the human condition, found to be in the likeness of a human being.”

Philipians 2:5-7

Surrender. Surrender, surrender, surrender.

The Christian meditation practice of Centering Prayer is based on this simple (but difficult) notion — that we “let the same mind be in [us] that was in Christ Jesus” – that we surrender. That we let go.

In Centering Prayer the action of surrendering or letting go revolves around any thought that comes up during our twice-daily meditation sit. However, as anybody who has ever meditated — or even tried to meditate — in any stream of practice can attest, surrendering, letting go, returning to the breath, or coming back to a mantra while “on the cushion” is one thing. Living the practice “off the cushion” is another.

This is where the *Welcoming Practice* (or, as it’s also known, the *Welcoming Prayer*) comes in. The Welcoming Practice is a discipline of surrender in daily life.

However, we are ***not*** surrendering in a way that puts us at the whims of our daily lives or another person’s actions in the sense of allowing ourselves to be trampled on or used. We are not surrendering the legitimate emotions and feelings of this human life.

This practice of surrender is focused on what Thomas Keeting called the “false-self programming” — that is, the ways that our egos can lead and pull us in any given moment.

For as lofty or even strange as this sounds, the practice is eminently practical, simple, and challenging.

The practice involves three steps — focus and sink in, welcome, and let go.

Step one: Focus and Sink in

Whenever we find ourselves triggered we pause and connect to sensation. This recognizes that emotions such as anger, frustration, shame, fear, etc *always* show up in the body as sensation. In this first critical step of the Welcoming Practice, we focus on where the experience at hand is showing up in the body *as sensation.* Focus on the sensation. Sink into the sensation.

Step two: Welcome

Focusing and sinking into sensation, we begin to see what emotions might be present. Is there anger? Is there shame? Is there fear, even terror? Welcome it. Note that we’re *not* welcoming what triggered the emotions. We’re not welcoming the person who cut us off in traffic. We’re not welcoming the helplessness that the news of the day engendered. We’re not welcoming the toxic environment that we might find ourselves in. We *are* welcoming our emotional response. Whatever is there — welcome it.

Step three: Let go

This final step is not one to force, but to also allow. And the longer that we work with the practice, the more that we might find the *Letting go* embedded in the *Welcoming.* Here, the point is to let go of the desires that feed the emotions that we have welcomed. We let go of the desire for security and survival, esteem and affection, power and control – those mechanisms of ego that can get us caught – and we sink into the intention to *embrace this moment as it is.*

What we might find as we work with the Welcoming Practice is that beyond the triggers that can hook us is a spaciousness that can hold all of our experience – the spaciousness that is God’s presence in us and in all.