Contemplation is the final aspect of the 5Cs that we have stressed as the pillars to OWITF (Community, Consciousness, Celibacy, Compassion and Contemplation).

For many of us, our immediate reaction to most situations is one of judgement, defensiveness or attachment. But we can also be open, grateful and present during some moments of mindfulness. The Franciscan priest, Richard Rohr would call these mindful moments the ‘second gaze’.

The ego or false self seems to have the first gaze at almost everything. The first gaze is more calculating than compassionate. The True Self often seems to be hidden behind the defensive needs of the false self. Rohr continues, “I can see why all spiritual traditions insist on daily prayer, otherwise I can assume that I am back in the cruise control of small and personal self-interest, the pitiable and fragile ‘richard’ self.”

A premise of the spiritual journey is that personal transformation is possible and through spiritual practice we can explore that possibility. This spiritual practice is not referring to a spirituality that promises virtue through a combination of gritted teeth and a will of iron. Such virtue would be born of the ego and would be unlikely to last. No, the spiritual practice we are thinking of here is the practice of prayer and, more specifically, the practice of contemplative styles of prayer such as centering prayer.

Centering prayer is a non-conceptual and non-vocal prayer. It is a prayer of silence and a step towards openness to the gift of contemplation. The method is simple. You choose a sacred word of one or two syllables. You sit comfortably with your eyes closed and silently repeat the sacred word. As thoughts fade you allow the repetition of the sacred word to fade also and as thoughts demand attention, you gently strengthen the repetition of the word. At the end of the twenty minute session you add a few additional moments with your eyes closed in order to ease the transition back to an awareness of your surroundings.
Buddha was asked, “What have you gained from meditation?”

He replied, “Nothing.”

However, Buddha said, “Let me tell you what I lost: Anger, Anxiety, Depression, Insecurity, Fear of old age and Death.”