

The Art of Meditation 1: Sacred Time and Sacred Place

The first step in spiritual practice is to take the decision to do it. The second step is to set aside, each day, a time and place in which to do it. The third step is to do it!

We will assume that you have taken the first step and made a decision to meditate.

The Practice

Sacred Place

Meditation is about getting to know yourself as a holy and sacred being. Rev Mario recommended that we set aside in our dwelling, some place that is dedicated to this. If you have the room, then you may set aside a whole room for this. Most of us do not have this luxury, but we can decide *where* we can best undertake a few minutes of silent meditation each day. It may be our bedroom, it may be the kitchen – it doesn't matter. When we begin the process of regular meditation, then this place starts becoming powerful for us.

Which ever place we choose, we should claim this space as our meditation space by doing one simple thing. We create an altar. The altar represents our self. What we place upon the altar will represent those things which we choose to honour within our self. The altar may be a small table in the room, a bookshelf or a chest of drawers. It may be a shelf in the kitchen.

What we choose to place upon the altar is largely up to our own personal preference – what is sacred to us. If possible, cover your altar with a white cloth. This symbolises the purity of your intention. Next, try to place the four elements on your altar. This can be achieved with only two objects: A flower in a vase of water (earth and water) and a candle (fire and air). Simply light the candle before you begin meditation and extinguish it at the end. You may want to put a symbol on your altar which represents something sacred to you, from whichever spiritual tradition you have elected to follow. Rev Mario preferred the symbol of the candle to the cross – “The cross”, he said, “represents death, but the flame represents the living Christ”. You could also place a photo of someone you love, or names of people you want to include in your prayers upon your altar.

Sacred Time

Pick a time where you can be alone for a few minutes each day. Five minutes will suffice – ten minutes is better still.

If possible, try and set a time which you can use consistently every day. It is more important to keep to the same time each day than to worry about *what* that time is. Some may prefer to begin the day with their spiritual practice; others may prefer to end the day with it; still others may choose the middle of the day.

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Sitting Still

Now that you have created a place and time, you are ready to begin. Sit yourself comfortably any way that allows the spine to be erect. Yoga positions such as the “Lotus Position”, or the “Adept’s Position” are fine. But so is simply sitting in a chair! If you elect to sit in a chair, you need to choose a chair that does not slant either backwards or forwards. If it does slant place a pillow in it to support your spine. With feet flat on the ground, hands loosely held in your lap and back erect but not tense, you are ready to begin!

The Insight

Simply taking onboard these preparations for spiritual practice creates a change in your environment.

Mario used to say that spiritual practice attracts the “Light” towards the practitioner. There are spiritual *beings* which dwell in the Light who can assist and uphold us on our spiritual journey. When we create our sacred space, we make a declaration to the universe, that we have made a choice. That choice is to reveal ourselves as a spiritual being.

When we create a regular time, then those *beings* that are attracted by the Light also come regularly. Over time, the combination of our space and time create a power. This power, which we generate, then aids us to travel onto the next turn of the spiral and to intensify our spiritual practice and understanding.

Prayer vs Meditation

Mario would say that “Prayer is talking to God, while meditation is listening to God”. We need to make both, equal parts of an active spiritual life. Prayer creates a positive, courageous energy within our life; meditation develops insight, understanding and knowledge. Of course, both prayer and meditation are part of the Eucharist –the spiritual practice above all else.

In later studies in “Practice and Insight” we will look at different ways of approaching spiritual practice – and in particular of discovering meditation.