



Title of Learning Activity: Introduction to Mindfulness & Christian Meditation

Topic: Mindfulness, Christian Meditation - Benefits, Practices, Types of Meditation

Grade(s): 7-12

Duration: 140-155 minutes for full activities (3-30 minutes for specific activities).

These activities can be taught over 2-3 days.

Activity Overview, Rationale and Description

This lesson explains the distinction between mindfulness and meditation, the benefits of each, and gives an overview of the history and types of Christian meditation practices (e.g. lectio divina, visio divina, silent meditation, etc.)

Overall Expectation(s)

Religion

Grade 7: ML 3.3: distinguish between the human and theological virtues, and provide examples of how they work interdependently in the events of everyday life to guide our behaviour toward the performance of good acts in our search for holiness (CCC nos. 1803-1845)

Grade 8: LS2.2: summarize the key principles of Catholic social justice and link them to the primary Christian values of love, promotion of life, reconciliation, inclusion, compassions, fidelity, liberation, community and hope (CCC nos. 356-384, 1928-1933, 1391-1401)

Grade 9 (HRE101): PS1.3: defend the value of a variety of prayer forms (including traditional forms such as retreats, the Rosary, Litanies, Eucharistic Adoration, etc) as opportunities to encounter God's grace that is necessary for living a life of faith in contemporary society.

Grade 10 (HRE201): PS1.2: identify and access the importance of Christian meditation (e.g. lectio divina, contemplation, Taize, Examen, using one's imagination, Jesus prayer, spiritual writings, icons) in deepening one's relationship with God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Catholic Graduate Expectation(s)

A Discerning Believer Formed in the Catholic Faith Community who:

CGE1d - develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good;

CGE1f - Seeks intimacy with God and celebrates communion with God, others and creation through prayer and worship;

CGE1h - Respects the faith traditions, world religions, and the life journeys of all people of good will

A Reflective, Creative, and Holistic Thinker who

CGE3d - adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experience

Grade 11 (HRF3O1): PS2.2: compare the practice of prayer, meditation, fasting, sacrifice and pilgrimage within various religions and access their importance for the expression of one's spirituality. Grade 11 (HRT3M1): PS3.2: explain various ways in which people encounter the sacred in life (in nature, prayer, meditation, key life events, in an encounter with others). Grade 12 (HRE4O1): PS1.2: summarize the three traditional expressions of prayer in the Church that draw us close to God: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplation, and the five traditional forms of prayer: blessing/adoration, petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise; explain the benefit of fasting with prayer. Grade 12 (HRE4M1): PS1.5: describe how Christian communities and families can become “schools for prayer of the heart” within contemporary society, joyfully keeping the Holy Trinity at the centre of our lives in support of each other (e.g. family Rosary, grace before meals, prayers before bed, practicing Christian Meditation with a prayer group; also, describe how prayer is a battle, where distraction, dryness, lack of faith, and acedia (apathy) can be overcome by God's grace and persevering in love. Social Sciences: Grade 12 (HSE4M): D1.1: describe how fundamental values, attitudes, and day-to-day behaviour (e.g. fair-mindedness, empathy, reflection, respecting and embracing diversity, personal language use) can contribute to equity and social justice.	A Self-Directed, Responsible, Lifelong Learner who: CGE4g - examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities, and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities A Responsible Citizen who: CGE7e - witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful, and compassionate society CGE7j - contributes to the common good
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Learning Goals By the end of the learning session, students will be able to: - Define Mindfulness and Christian Meditation - Understand the history and differences between Mindfulness and Christian Meditation - Reflect on various Mindfulness and Christian Meditation practices - Experience Mindfulness and Christian Meditation practices Teacher Notes - Please access the slide deck that accompanies this lesson: Mindfulness & Christian Meditation - Please review facilitation instructions for some of the activities listed below (e.g. All-Pass, Butterfly

Pass, etc.) If possible, try to facilitate the discussions in a circle. You can learn more about that rationale in [Lesson 3: Community Circle](#).

- If you haven't co-created *community commitments* (e.g. discussion guidelines) as a class, please refer to Lesson 3, section D and E (link above) for instructions.

Scripture / Bible Story



Matthew 4:1-11

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished...Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him."

Joshua 1:8

"This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful."

Psalms 1:1-2

"Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night."

Philippians 4:8

"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Mindfulness / Meditation Prayer Activity



A simple 2-minute [Mindfulness Meditation Warm-Up](#) will introduce students to the practice of mindfulness (breathing) and meditation (centering on God).

LESSON

Minds On (10-15 minutes)

Begin with the mindfulness meditation prayer activity, [Mindfulness Meditation Warm-Up](#).



Do a quick "**All Pass**" with the Prompt: **What is one word** you would use to describe how you feel at this moment? You can be open and honest.

Acknowledge the feelings of the class by summarizing key responses heard from students.

Invite the class to join in the Opening Prayer provided on the slides.

Learning Activities

A. What is Mindfulness? (5-10 minutes)

Mindfulness, as defined by Jon Kabot-Zinn, is ‘...the awareness that emerges when paying attention on purpose to the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experiences moment to moment.’ In this image we are invited to explore the difference between living from moment to moment with our mind full or being mindful.

As Catholics and in many other faith traditions we do many things that become routine...but part of the practice of meditation is being intentional about our words, and being mindful and prayerful, and fully present in the moment.

Video: Learning To Surf The Waves

(Please note that a variation of this activity is also in the lesson ‘Active Listening’.) (15-20 minutes)

‘Mindfulness is like the ocean. Even when there are big swells crashing on the surface, down at the bottom it is relatively still. With mindfulness practice, we can learn to find this same stillness deep within ourselves, while the waves of emotion, thought and external experiences wash over us. With mindfulness, we are not trying to get rid of our thoughts and feelings. Rather, we are learning to look at the experience as it is unfolding moment by moment with more awareness and acceptance.’ *Mindfulness Without Borders*

Butterfly Pass Prompt:



Think of a time when the “waves” have been fun and other times when they have just been too much. How can you be present to those moments in your life?

After a number of students have shared their input, acknowledge their experiences and feelings.

There are things that we can control and things that we cannot. The waves in our lives will always surround us, but we have choices. To be mindful is to be present wholly to those moments--the good, the bad and the in-between. We have the choice to decide **how** we will choose to react with these moments. Is it something we can handle on our own? Is it something we need to ask for advice or support?

B. The Benefits of Mindfulness and Meditation (15-20 min)

The challenge: Keep a mindfulness journal. Choose a time every day to be mindful for one minute. Write and document your thoughts every day. Record to see if your perspective changes over time.

Mindfulness is known to have many benefits including: restoring your child-like wonder through paying attention to the simple things in life; improving relationship satisfaction; improving the quality of your sleep;

stress reduction; improves cognitive capacity supports working memory; decreases emotional reactivity; increases empathy; helps manage chronic pain; boots your immune system; and improves quality of sleep.

Famous People Who Practice Mindfulness and Meditation (20-25 minutes)

Mindfulness and meditation have become popular.

All the famous people in the following slides practice mindfulness and meditation. Who can you name?

Activity: Molecule Bonding See [LWH Conversational Structures](#) for explanation of 'Molecule Bonding'

Prompts for each molecule bonding pass: (See molecule number beside each question)

- Which famous person most surprised you that they practice mindfulness and/or meditate? (4)
- How does this change your perception of that person? (2)
- What impact does that have on your attitude regarding mindfulness and meditation? (3)
- Why do you think these celebrities engage in mindfulness or meditation? (3)

Debrief:

- Artists, athletes, executives, and others who have demanding schedules might find mindfulness/meditation helpful in **reducing stress and anxiety**
- Practicing it before a high level performance (e.g. game, competition, show, etc.) may help **increase concentration and focus**
- It promotes better **health and well-being** by **boosting immunity, lowering blood pressure, improving sleep**, etc.

To wrap up this section, show the video of students sharing their experience with meditation.

Video: Benefits of Christian Meditation - TCDSB Students (2 min)

<https://youtu.be/MsvxFo9HqIk>

C. Stages of Prayer (5-10 min.)

As Catholics, mindfulness and mediation supports us in deepening our relationship with God by being more present, loving, and praying with more open our hearts.

This circle illustrates the stages of prayer, their interrelationship and qualities.

When we start our prayer journey, we are on the outer layer of this circle. This is **mindfulness** practice, characterized by us trying to **“purge”** all of the distracting thoughts from our mind. It is by being mindful and therefore, more present in our lives that we can also enter into deeper prayer.

The next stage, **meditation**, is characterised by **illumination**, when we experience God talking to us (hear his voice).

The third stage, **contemplation**, marked by **unification**, when no words are necessary and God is speaking to our heart. This communion with God was practiced and documented by many...St. Teresa of Calcutta, St. John of the Cross.

D. Christian Meditation (10-15 min.)

We are now going to explore Christian Meditation. Christian Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. Through Christian Meditation, we can deepen our connection, communication and relationship with Christ and God. The word Meditation is rooted in the Greek meaning, “care, study and exercise.” It is a path to the knowledge of the love of Christ and union with him. (CCM p. 386)

The history of Christian Meditation began with Christ, who on many occasions, withdrew from others in order to enter into prayerful communion with God. The following three examples are powerful illustrations of how Jesus deepened his relationship with God through meditation.

After Jesus’ baptism, as cited in Mark 1:12, *‘...the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days...’*

Jesus, demonstrates how practicing Christian Mediation deepens our capacity to both listen to our callings and to sit in stillness.

In the second example, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane as described in Matthew 26:42, because he was feeling deeply sorrowful and troubled. He again withdrew from others and prayed to God saying, *‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’* Here, Jesus demonstrates how we can open our hearts to share both our sorrows and joys with God in prayer

A third example of Jesus withdrawing to pray by himself is after he heard about the Death of John The Baptist. As cited in (Matthew 14:13), *‘When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.’*

E. Some Types of Meditation (5-10 minutes)

There are many different ways to deepen your relationship with the Divine through Christian Mediation. Guided Meditation offers ways to encounter God, Jesus, the Trinity and Saints Some practices include the using **images; words** such as Scripture and sacred writings; and **music** such as Taize Prayer.

Some examples of guided meditation include the rosary, as well as Lectio Divina and Visio Divina which will be discussed in the following slide.

Another Christian and Catholic practice is Silent Meditation. In this prayerful state, the meditator is silent and may use a focus word such as Maranatha, *YHWH, Love, Peace, Jesus*) which helps to bring oneself back from distractions to the quiet.

Visio Divina , translated as ‘divine seeing’, is a meditative prayer using visual elements to help set your mind

on prayer. It allows God to speak into your heart through the image.

Lectio Divina or 'divine reading' is also a meditative prayer form but uses Scripture as its meditative focus instead of visual elements.

Visio Divina Practice (20-25 minutes)

Visio Divina, translated as 'divine seeing', is a meditative prayer using visual elements to help set your mind on prayer. It allows God to speak into your heart through the image. *Lectio Divina* or 'divine reading' is also a meditative prayer form but uses Scripture as its meditative focus instead of visual elements.

Let's look more closely at the elements of Visio Divina.

The first step is **Visio** which cues us **to look** at the image. Next, **Meditatio** invites us to **meditate**. We deepen our experience through **Oratio** or **prayer**. We are able to open our hearts even deeper by practising **Contemplatio**, which translated means to **contemplate**.

Experiencing Visio Divina

We are now going to practice *Visio Divina*. You can lead the visio divina with the script, [Take My Hand script](#).



Think-Pair-Share Prompt:

What is one word or one sentence that describes your experience today with Visio Divina?

After a few minutes, invite any pairs to share their definition with the class.

Visual Meditations

The act of colouring or creating any other art, can be a practice of mindfulness and meditation. In eastern religious traditions, mandalas are a form of visual meditation and involve creating repetitive patterns. Watch the video as an example of a simple mandala pattern:

Video - Mandala (embedded in slide)

A Christian form of visual meditation that has been increasing in popularity is that of art journaling with the Bible or Scripture quotes. You will introduce this activity at a later lesson. If you wish to explore this further, look at the slide deck, [Art Journaling with God](#).

Silent Meditation (25-30 min)

Practising silent meditation in the Catholoc context as described by Ernie Christie is, 'to sit silently in the presence of the Trinity, within their circle of Love.'

Meditating In Silence - The Breath of God

“...then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the human became a living being.” This passage from Genesis 2:7, reminds us that God created us by breathing life into us. Therefore, as Christians and Catholics, we understand that we are in constant dialogue with God through our origins - God’s life-giving breath. When we focus on our breath during our silent mediation, we are actually both in the presence of and in communion with God.

Preparing To Meditate

When preparing to meditate, remember to consider the atmosphere, minimizing noise and other distractions, your body posture which is impacted by where you are sitting, and whether you prefer music or silence for this specific meditation.

Meditating In Silence

Invite students to get into a comfortable position (see the beginning of the [Mindfulness and Meditation Warm-Up video](#) for an example). They can be invited to look at the slide, “Be still and know that I am God” if they don’t feel comfortable closing their eyes. Begin with a few breaths (see warm-up video for example). Then use the script below.

Script: Choose a word that resonates for you, that connects to the Spirit within you, or brings you into a place of peace. Here are some suggestions:

[Maranatha](#) (“Come Lord Jesus”, in Aramaic)
[Holy Spirit](#)
[Jesus](#)
[Love](#)
[Peace](#)

Sit upright

Be silent

Be still

Breathe in... breathe out.

Continue breathing naturally, paying attention to the word and each breath.

If you get distracted by thoughts, just acknowledge them, let them pass;
and centre yourself on the breath again. Continue this in silence for 30 seconds.

After 30 seconds, ask students to bring their attention back to the room when they’re ready.



Do an “**All Pass**” with the Prompt: [What is one word you would use to describe how you feel at this moment? You can be open and honest.](#)

Acknowledge the feelings of the class by summarizing key responses heard from students.

F. Catholic Connections

Connection to Sacrament and Liturgical Calendar

Anointing of the Sick: although this sacrament used to be limited to those who were near death (previously called “Extreme Unction”), it is now given to all those who wish to receive it (due to having an illness, before receiving surgery, etc). For those receiving it as their Last Rites (since this sacrament comprises reconciliation, communion, and anointing with oil), this is a time to contemplate and meditate upon one’s life, and to seek forgiveness for any wrongdoings.



Lent: Lent is a time when we emulate Christ's time in the desert--as Jesus spent 40 days and nights in the desert, contemplating and being tempted by the devil, we too spend those 40 days and nights in contemplation and meditation of the great mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. But we also spend that time in the contemplation of the desert of sin, and we take the time to seek forgiveness for our sins and to ameliorate ourselves.

Connection to Catholic Church Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching:

Community and the Common Good—In a global culture driven by excessive individualism, our tradition proclaims that the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society -- in economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Our Church teaches that the role of the government and other institutions is to protect human life and human dignity and promote the common good.



Participation-All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. Conversely, it is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society. In the words of the U.S. bishops, "The ultimate injustice is for a person or group to be treated actively or abandoned passively as if they were non-members of the human race. To treat people this way is effectively to say they simply do not count as human beings."



Solidarity-Catholic social teaching proclaims that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Solidarity means that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

Encyclicals: *Deus Caritas Est*

Catechism: 2706: To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

2707: There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower. But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus.

2708: Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in lectio divina or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.

2723: Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. Its goal is to make our own faith in the subject considered, by confronting it with the reality of our own life.

2721: The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. They have in common the recollection of the heart.

2654: The spiritual writers, paraphrasing Matthew 7:7, summarize in this way the dispositions of the heart nourished by the word of God in prayer "Seek in reading and you will find in meditating; knock in mental prayer and it will be opened to you by contemplation."

2705: Meditation is above all a quest. The mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. The required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history the page on which the "today" of God is written.

Connection to Catholic Role-Model

St. John Cassian (360-435), a monk who dedicated his life to learning about the interconnectedness of meditation and Christian life. He founded two monasteries, and helped to incorporate Egyptian monasticism into the western Church,

[Biography of St. John Cassian](#)



John Main (1926-1982), was an Irish Benedictine monk and one of the major Christian spiritual teachers of this era. He recognized the need for a simple method of meditation open to all within the church. In the monastic Desert Tradition he found a way that resonates directly with the contemplative teaching of Jesus on prayer (from <https://johnmaincenter.org/about-meditation/>).

[Collected Talks of John Main OSB](#)

St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582): the gift of God to Teresa in and through which she became holy and left her mark on the Church and the world is threefold: She was a woman; she was a contemplative; she was an active reformer (from <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-teresa-of-avila>).

[12 Interesting Facts About St. Teresa of Avila](#)

St. Julian of Norwich (1342-1416), she devoted her life to prayer and contemplation of the meaning of her visions. During her lifetime, she became known as a counselor, whose advice combined spiritual insight with common sense, and many people from all walks of life came to speak with her (from

<https://stjuliansaustin.org/about/who-is-julian>).

[Julian of Norwich, A Theologian for Our Time](#)

Consolidation (5-10 minutes)



All-Pass Prompt: What is one practice you experienced today that you can incorporate into your life? When, and how?

Additional Resources

Books and Articles:

Guided Meditations for Young Catholics (with CD) by Glynnis Hope and John Dawson. 2013

<https://en.novalis.ca/products/guided-meditations-for-young-catholics-book-and-cd>

Pope's First Encyclical is Meditation on Love (New York Times)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/25/international/europe/popes-first-encyclical-is-meditation-on-love.html>

Rohr's Daily Meditations

<https://cac.org/2021-daily-meditations/#listen>

Meditation through Art Journaling with God:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1bE5nirt7HEESgonNGj8U3eTvDAB-f2NU-ZiApmOaDpw/edit?usp=sharing>

Christian Meditation: A Catholic Perspective - Monograph #1 (Fall 2017) - Institute for Catholic Education Curriculum Series

https://iceont.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/TC_MG_Curr_Issue_1_ChristianMeditation.pdf

Video:

The Scientific Power of Meditation (3 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aw71zanwMnY>

Praying With Your Eyes: How to Get Started with Visio Divina

<https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/praying-with-your-eyes-how-to-get-started-with-visio-divina>

Audio: Mindfulness Without Borders

Recordings of mindfulness practices in English and Spanish (e.g. mindful breathing, cultivating gratitude, etc.

<https://mindfulnesswithoutborders.org/pages/mindfulness-practices>

Apps:

Centering Prayer Mobile App. *Contemplative Outreach*.

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-mobile-app/>

Reimagining the Examen App by Loyola Press

<http://reimaginingexamen.ignatianspirituality.com>

WCCM (World Community for Christian Meditation) Meditation and Community

<https://wccm.org/app/>

References

Prayer adapted from: The Canadian Christian Meditation Community

<https://www.wccm-canada.ca/opening-and-closing-prayer>

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/a-meditation-prayer.html>

Prayer adapted from: The Irish Catholic. <https://www.irishcatholic.com/a-closing-prayer-for-meditation/>

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