



THE HOLY LIGHT ACADEMY



STEPPING STONES ALONG THE PATH



Your Sanctuary of Solitude

To establish your own personal place for quietude is important to your spiritual well-being. If you are seeking peace and tranquility in your life, a place of inner retreat for your soul, and if you long to withdraw from the stress of the world or the fast-paced city life, then it indeed becomes a priority for you to find yourself a sacred place of serenity, a sacred space of retreat from in the rest of the world. If your soul longs for this, for the Inner Life of the Spirit, you know that you must find it.

You have your activities and responsibilities in the world, and these need tending to; however, these things can cause stress in your life, and you need to withdraw momentarily, to part with the constant struggle. The best time for this is at night before retiring when things of the day have calmed down. Likewise, after awakening from sleep, attending your sacred place will be beneficial. What you need to develop for yourself is a Sanctuary of Solitude, where you can enter the quiet place of your heart. The outer often reflects the inner, for when you have a place of silence to go to, this reflects the place of silence within your soul, where you find God's Spirit dwelling. When you go to your church or place of worship, and you bow your head in prayer toward the altar, you are humbling yourself to God at the sacred altar of your own heart.

When you look for your special place, you should find one that is naturally conducive to the peace and harmony you seek, free of the noise and stress of the world, whether this is outdoors or indoors. If you live in the country, you can find a secluded spot more easily. You may find a spot outdoors, in the fresh air and amidst nature, such as merely sitting up against a tree, or beside a babbling brook (for this sound is very meditative), or upon a hilltop overlooking a valley. Essentially you want to find a place that feels right to you, that will become your own peaceful spot.

However, if you live in the city, perhaps someplace in a quiet park will do. You can even take advantage of the peace and tranquility within a church when few people are present, or none at all. Whether it is a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple, when there are no regular assemblies, the atmosphere in such buildings is usually very peaceful and harmonious, and conducive for prayer and meditation. In many cases, if such an assembly has attuned its consciousness to where it truly accepts the Presence of God in its sacred place of worship, then this will indeed become a reality, and you can tune into that Presence as well.

If you have a secluded place in your home, this may be the most convenient and accessible place to attend your quiet time. Likewise, as you spend more time here, repeatedly, you can also establish the Presence of God here, just as it had been done in the church or temple and such places.

For as you reach up in your heart in prayer and worship to the Creator, or in meditation, day after day, this is creating a sacred pattern of allowing God's Presence and reality into your special place, and in your life and in your heart. As you live your day-to-day life, you begin allowing God into it more and more, for as you open your heart and mind to Him more often, you will discover His Presence is not only in your special sanctuary and in your heart, but wherever you go. In Christian Mysticism, you can allow God in through the Master Jesus, especially if you are developing a relationship with Jesus Christ.

When you begin searching for a quiet place in your home, find one that feels right for you. Keep this place for the duration because you are creating a sacred space for the vibration of peace and solitude, and God's Presence.

In this sanctuary of solitude, this is where you begin opening a real sacred space for Jesus Christ and God's Presence to come into it. As you continue the habit of bringing God-through-Jesus into your sacred space and into your heart, and into your life, new doors will continue to open to you. When tuning into this Holy Presence at your altar becomes regular after several months or so, soon you will be able to tune into it wherever you go, not just in your little sanctuary, because you will find it within yourself. You will even be able to bring this Presence with you to others who are receptive, bringing peace to those who need it, or love, or joy, etc., for it will be Jesus Christ doing it through you. And within Jesus Christ is the Holy Presence of God, for he did say, "I and the Father are one." This is perhaps one of the most profound and mystical statements declared by him, and as he asks us to follow in His footsteps, we may grow toward this Divine Unity as well. This is what you will discover on this Mystical Path, and it can begin in your Sanctuary of Solitude.

God is not far away. He is right here within you. God is Love, and God is Spirit, and these exist within us. To have an intellectual understanding of these things is one thing, but to realize them profoundly on a soul and heart level is the key that truly opens doors.

Your Home Altar

If you are going to establish a place in your own home, this can be a separate quiet room, or a corner of a room, such as your bedroom, or even a closet if it is big enough. Once you have decided where it will be, you can set up a prayer table, a home altar of sorts, and place a comfortable, straight-backed chair in front of it. You can set up this altar however you wish, but in essence, it only reflects the altar of your own heart, where you will find God indwelling. This is the important thing you must not forget. This physical altar serves as a focal point, a starting point to begin the inward journey of the heart.

You don't want this altar to be too big, perhaps a foot and a half to two feet wide will be sufficient. You want it just high enough to meet an area between your belly and your heart when you kneel. It can be anything from a bedside table to a sturdy cardboard box, or a coffee table, or whatever you can find.

We suggest putting a white linen cloth on top of it. If you are of the Christian persuasion, find a decent picture of Jesus that you have a good feeling about, one that will help you feel a connection with him when you pray. Try to find one that shows him looking directly at you, not off to the side somewhere. If he seems to be emanating peace, or love, or joy, any of these (not a serious or angry expression), then this will work.

Those of the Buddhist persuasion can find small statues of the Buddha, or even a picture of him will do. Whatever your religious persuasion is, you can procure the appropriate item

accordingly.

You can set the picture or sacred object on the table against the wall, or hang it up on the wall, as you also will be placing an eternal flame candle in front of the picture. This central candle should be a glass bottle light, which you can find at any Catholic supply store. Use either blue or clear glass, which shows the whiteness of the candle, as white denotes Purity, as in the purity of your own intent as well as the sublime Purity of God. Blue denotes true spiritual devotion, and also designates the Father point of the Trinity. You can set up two smaller side candles as well, one on each side, near the front of the table toward you. This will complete the symbology of the Trinity.

These are helpful suggestions, but you can set up your home altar however you feel inclined, according to your particular spiritual tradition. Then you may wish to have your sanctuary of solitude and altar consecrated by a minister or priest, or you can bless it yourself, by simply asking the Creator in prayer to bless it for you. Anyone can give blessings, if they are sincere and of pure intent. Being able to bless is truly empowering, whether it is blessing a person, place, or thing.

If you wish to only light the candles when you are attending your altar, this is fine. However, in many traditions, the central eternal flame is kept lit and renewed with another bottle light when it is too low. This continuous burning of the flame symbolizes the Eternalness of God's Spirit, and the flame itself represents the indwelling of the Presence of God within the altar of your own heart. Such symbols on your altar can be meditated upon for further insight. However, some people feel reluctant to leave a burning flame unattended. So this is a matter of individual choice. These are symbols only that reflect the inner spiritual nature.

Now you have established your sacred place where you can find peace and solitude within, which will guide you into the true serenity that lies within your soul. Here in this sacred space you can pray, worship, meditate, do the practices or spiritual exercises, or even study if you wish. When you leave its quiet confines, you should feel relaxed and refreshed, and the tensions of the day should be relieved.

We have suggested using this sanctuary in the morning upon rising and at night before retiring to bed. When attending your altar in the morning you can greet your Creator and the Master Jesus asked for blessing and guidance throughout the day. You may ask how you can serve God that day, perhaps by serving mankind, and if you are observant as the day unfolds, he will give you an opportunity, or more, to help another, to bless one in need, to give forth peace and joy, etc., and your life will be more fulfilling as you learn to strive to serve God by serving mankind.

If you wish to attend your altar more often, perhaps at noon or sometime in the afternoon, that is fine too. Those who work may at least be able to attend their altar in the morning and at night.

Going to the Presence of God by way of your altar can become quite an adventure, for you are learning not to be bound by this world, as you are learning to enter the spiritual world beyond.

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