

## Practicing Nature

### 15-Minute Meditation

No one needs to be convinced of the benefit of spending 15 minutes (30 is even better) in nature at least a couple of times a week. It does not have to be elaborate – a beach, your own backyard, a downtown park, or even looking out the window at a nearby tree will do.

Nearly all nature meditations include these steps:

- Totally stop what you are doing, leave it all aside, turn off your cell phone, make a complete break from your routine. (The world will likely get along without you for 15 minutes.) Go outside if you can. If you are on a long driving trip, stop and get out of the car.
- Find a spot that feels good. Take off your shoes if you can. Walk around until you come to a place where you feel like pausing.
- Stand still or sit. Slowly become absorbed in your surroundings. Trust this space to enfold you and refresh you.
- Look at your surroundings, really look. Scrutinize the bark of a tree, the color of a flower, the texture of a squirrel's tail, the pebbles in the dirt.
- Listen. Shut out the street noises and try to hear if there is a bird singing, or water moving, or leaves rustling. Give yourself to it.
- Notice if there are any smells. Touch what is safe to touch. If there is anything edible, taste it. Let your awareness of this space be heightened.
- Offer God a prayer of thanks for His creation. Offer God anything else you want to offer.
- If you can, take a leaf, a small rock, a flower or some other piece of nature with you as leave and prepare to enter your life again. Thank God for this gift.