

To mirror gaze, you use a mirror to make eye contact with your own reflection instead of closing your eyes and turning your attention inward. This practice can become deeply intimate since it requires you to spend a few quiet, mindful moments sitting with not just your thoughts, but your own watchful eyes.

Divinity lives within us. We are image-bearers of God, which means that by looking at ourselves we are peeking at a part of the Divine puzzle. It also means that through seeking God, we can come to know ourselves more fully.

You'll need a mirror large enough to see your face. It's also best to use a mirror that stands on its own.

1. Find a quiet place and get comfortable in a chair or on the floor. Please feel free to turn off your camera, so that you can sit comfortably with yourself for the duration of this exercise, without concern of being observed.
2. Angle the mirror so you can easily make eye contact with your reflection.
3. Length of time - I will set the timer, and close with a prayer at the end. There's no need to set a specific meditation goal. Your aim is to sit with yourself, as reflected in your mirror.
4. Close your eyes and **slow your breathing**. Take several deep breaths, allowing yourself to inhale, hold, and then slowly exhale.
5. As your body relaxes, let yourself breathe naturally. Turn your attention to any tense spots in your body and **visualize that tension slowly dissolving** with each breath.
6. Open your eyes and look into the mirror. Pay attention to the rhythm of your breath. Does it feel or sound any different as you gaze into the mirror?

7. Consider the message in your eyes. Is it critical or kind? Do you immediately focus on something specific you dislike about yourself? Visualize each slow breath dissolving that dislike.
8. What thoughts come to mind when we are face to face with ourselves - who are we? How are we perceived? What is our gender identity? What is our gender expression? In what ways have we reflected on or questioned our gender? What gender were we socialized as? How do we showcase our personality through our appearance? How do we hide parts of who we are through how we present?
9. Understandings of gender continually evolve. In the course of a person's life, the interests, activities, clothing, and professions that are considered the domain of one gender or another evolve in ways both small and large.
10. Bodies themselves are also gendered in the context of cultural expectations. Masculinity and femininity are equated with certain physical attributes, labeling us as more or less a man/woman based on the degree to which those attributes are present. This gendering of our bodies affects how we feel about ourselves and how others perceive and interact with us.
11. Gender identity is our internal experience and the naming of our gender. It can correspond to or differ from the sex we were assigned at birth.
12. Social gender is the third dimension. Social gender includes gender roles and expectations and how society uses those to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms.
13. Consider the message in your eyes. How are you feeling? Do you feel old memories surrounding your gender surfacing? Are new questions, insecurities, or frustrations coming up for you? Visualize each slow breath absorbing that tension; give yourself grace.

14. If you find yourself grasping at any feelings that come up, or narrowing your focus to particularly critical thought, gently return your attention to your reflection. Let your thoughts travel where they will, but hold your gaze, looking at yourself with kindness, as they wander.

Let us pray for ...

- People who are currently questioning their gender identity.
- Children and youth, that they might be free to explore their gender identity without shame or disapproval.
- Trans people who are certain in their identities, but whose identities are not seen as Godly by those around them.
- People who believe that being trans is a rejection of God's plan for us, that they might treat trans people with respect and dignity regardless.

Trans people who are ostracized and discriminated against in employment, schooling, and housing.

- Trans people who feel excluded from those around them, whether this exclusion occurs deliberately or unintentionally.
- Faith communities, that they work to welcome outsiders in, especially trans people who have historically been excluded or had their identities denied by faith communities.
- Trans and nonbinary people who do not necessarily feel safe or included in LGBTQ+ spaces, especially trans people of color, Indigenous trans/Two Spirit folks, and trans people with disabilities.
- Trans people around the world who cannot use their chosen name for fear of retribution, or whose chosen names are ignored by loved ones.
- Trans people facing barriers to legal name changes.

- People struggling to adjust to their trans family and friends' new names and pronouns.
- People who fail to recognize the sanctity of trans people's chosen names.
- Trans people throughout the world who are criminalized because of their gender identity.
- Trans people who are discriminated against through institutional regulations.
- Nonbinary people, whose gender is not considered a valid option in almost all governments around the world.
- Trans people and their allies who are currently working to undo discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, as well as the trans people who struggled against institutions before us without seeing the result.
- Institutions that discriminate against trans people—whether deliberately or unintentionally—that they may work to reform their policies to make their institution safe and affirming.
- Trans and nonbinary people who want to take hormones and/or have gender-confirming surgery, but cannot because of the costs or pre-existing medical conditions.
- Trans people who are struggling with dysphoria or who are misgendered because of their appearance.
- Trans people who do not want to take hormones or have surgery, that their identities and choices are respected.
- The communities of the Body of Christ, that they remain open to all who wish to be a part of it.
- Trans youth whose parents have told them to leave home, causing them to become homeless or in a dangerous housing situation.
- Trans people who are lonely or isolated.

- Trans people whose chosen families do not have the same rights and legal recognition as biological families
- Organizations that provide support to trans youth, their parents, and nontraditional families
- Trans people in need of refuge, solace, security, and affirmation.
- Trans and nonbinary people who feel abandoned by God, that they may find comfort.
- Those who make it more difficult for trans people to access God, that they might learn to remove barriers rather than create them.

Divinity lives within us. Divinity lives within all people. Amen.