

Prayer—Forest Bathing (Shinrin-Yoku)

Forest bathing begins before your first step—at the quiet edge where forest meets intention. You pause. The wind stirs the leaves and something inside you softens. Take a slow breath and let yourself arrive, not just with your body, but fully, with your attention. There is no goal here, only presence. Perhaps you whisper a small intention, simple and honest: *"I am here."*

As you enter, move slowly, unhurried. Let the forest set the pace, not your thoughts. This isn't a path to be conquered—it's a relationship to be remembered. Let your eyes wander. Notice the flicker of sunlight through branches, the way the earth cradles your feet. Follow your curiosity like a child: meander, pause, touch.

Let your senses begin to open, one by one. Let your gaze soften—see the play of light, the layers of green, the pattern of bark. Close your eyes. Listen. First to the far sounds: birdcall, the sigh of wind. Then nearer: your breath, a rustle, the small heartbeat of the forest. Touch the world around you. Feel the coolness of stone, the velvet of moss, the rough truth of bark beneath your fingers.

Inhale deeply—there it is: the damp, loamy earth, the sweet sharpness of pine, something faint and flowering on the breeze. And then, taste. Open your mouth slightly and let the air rest on your tongue. You might notice its freshness, a hint of wildness carried from leaf and rain. If the forest offers something familiar and safe—like wild mint, spruce tips, or a clean spring—accept it with gratitude, letting its flavor connect you more deeply with the place itself. Even without eating, the taste of the forest lives in the air, in the breath, in the aliveness of being.

If a spot calls to you—beneath a tree, beside a stream—sit. Or lie down. Let stillness wrap around you like a blanket. You don't need to do anything. Let the forest do the doing. Let it hold you, breathe with you, remember you. Time slows. There's nowhere else to be.

And when the moment feels full, when your spirit is a little more settled, a little more rooted—rise gently. Offer a small gesture of thanks: a hand resting briefly on a tree, a whispered word, a stone placed with intention.

Then walk back not as someone leaving, but as someone returning—carrying the forest now inside you.