

CREATING A SACRED SPACE IN YOUR HOME CAN MAKE YOUR MORE LIFE SERENE

By Carolyn Faivre

Having a designated 'sacred space' in your home is not a new idea. Many different cultures have small areas in their homes or gardens which are designated as 'sacred spaces'. Creating such a space in your own home is a great way to support your spiritual and personal growth as well as offer a space you can go to center yourself and regain a sense of peace when life gets chaotic.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, my first 'Sacred Space' was the corner bookshelf in the upstairs hallway of my childhood home. I was raised Catholic, and every spring our school would create little altars in each of the classrooms to honor the blessed virgin. At home, my siblings and I created our own shrine for Mother Mary on the top shelf of the upstairs hall book case. We had tiny glass vases filled with lily of the valley, violets and lilac petals gathered from our yard. We set these in front of my sister's blue and gold plastic Virgin Mary statue. There was little crystal container, we filled with little slips of paper on which we had written our prayer requests. At Christmas time we'd put one of our family crèche scenes in place of the plastic Mary, and decorate with little branches of cedar and pine. Our little prayer papers would be tucked under baby Jesus' bed. We'd kneel in front of our little altar on the hard wood floor, using our pillows as cushions. With my younger sister and older brother, we would take turns saying the night-time prayers. As a kid, the ritual was magic. Now, I would call it 'sacred'.

Why Create A Personal Sacred Space? A designated space in your home invites peace and serenity. Represents. It can also represent your commitment to your spiritual and personal growth. It offers visual and energetic support for bringing your intentions for your life into manifestation.

Materials you will need: An attractive colored cloth or scarf, or a tray of a size suitable for holding the objects you will choose to place on your altar: photos, cards, statues, candles, a small bowl or decorative box; any items that will help you focus your intentions and commitment.



Choosing a space: Take some time and walk through the rooms of your home, with the intention of choosing the best room for your sacred space one which a small area where you can set up your altar and which might also support your prayer, meditation or journaling practice. Don't be afraid to be creative in choosing your space. In the past, clients I have worked with have used a shelf on a bookcase, the top of their dresser, a small end table in their study. One client, feeling she did not have any place in her shared apartment, created her sacred space in a dresser drawer in her bedroom, and would open the drawer when she would sit to meditation. Another, having no private personal space, created a collage representing her ideal sacred space and hung it inside her closet door where it was visible to her when she went to choose her clothes for the day.

Another client set up her sacred space on the window ledge over her kitchen sink. In her life an area of family conflict had been that no one ever washed up the dishes except her. She relayed that even though it wasn't a totally private space, having on the window sill above the sink, really shifted her negative feelings about 'kitchen work' to more positive and grateful feelings. She also said that as she kept a symbol for each person she felt was supporting her life changes and this helped her remember to mentally thank them every day; she would have a mental conversation with them while doing the dishes.

Cleansing your chosen space: Once you have chosen your space, clean the area. Cleaning has two forms. The first is to literally make sure this area is clean of dirt, dust and clutter. This need not apply to the entire room, just to the area you will declare as your sacred space. The second kind of cleaning is a cleaning of the energy/feeling of the space. You are literally going to 'clear the air' of the space. There are several ways to do this kind of clearing suggested below, though these are certainly not the only methods of air clearing. You might also use aromatherapy oils, candles, water or crystals. Here are the two methods I use most frequently; SMUDGING and SALT CLEARING.



SMUDGING is the method for clearing a space which I use most frequently. I use either mountain or white sage, cedar or sweet grass. This is a practice taught to me by one of my shamanic teachers. I pass on the instructions as they were taught to me. You can also learn more about this cleansing practice by checking out either of these links:

<http://www.snowowl.com/nainfosmudging.htm> or http://www.asunam.com/smudge_ceremony.html

1. Select a clay bowl, shell or natural burn-proof object, shaped in such a way that it can hold small pieces of sage or herbs, to use as a receptacle. This object should be used only for smudging. This object should be able to handle a small amount of heat.
2. Bring your attention to the intention of cleansing your sacred space. Give gratitude for the gifts of the smudging herbs as well as the gift of this cleansing ceremony. Take a small amount of herb (a couple of 1 inch pieces of white sage are ample for smudging a small room) If you have purchased a sage wand, I do not recommend lighting the wand, but rather taking small pieces of the sage from the wand, as it can be difficult to extinguish the wand once lit. Put the pieces in your bowl.
3. As you light the sage, state your request for the cleaning of the space. The sage should burn briefly and then the flame should go out and the sage will smoke slightly. Holding the bowl in one hand, with your free hand First wash the smoke over your body with your free hand. Move the bowl in the four directions (east, south, north and west), the celestial above and the earth at your feet. If the sage is still smoking, set it in the center of your sacred space until it extinguishes on its' own. If the sage smoke becomes too strong for you, you can extinguish the smoke by moving the pieces of sage apart, or by gently breaking off the smoking part of the leaf.
4. Express your gratitude for the herb for this gift of cleansing as you gently wash each object in smoke as you place it on your 'altar'.

SALT CLEARING is a method for cleansing to be used when you do not want any smoke residue.

1. You will need: a box of Sea Salt or unscented Epsom Salt, 90 proof or higher rubbing alcohol, an aluminum pie pan, a pot holder, and matches.
2. Assemble your items in the room where you will be doing the cleansing. Put a scant ½ cup of salt in the center of the pan. Take 1 cap-full of rubbing alcohol and pour in the middle of the salt.
3. Carefully light the salt/alcohol mixture. It should flame with a blue flame. If it does not light, it is probable the alcohol does not have a high enough proof. Do not pour on additional alcohol. Make sure you have lit the salt in the same spot where you poured the alcohol.
4. Using the pot holder, move the pan around the area surrounding your sacred space. When the flame goes out- which can vary from a few seconds to several minutes- the cleansing is finished. Dump the salt mixture in a toilet.

After you have cleared your intended sacred space, take some time to arrange the items in the space. You might think of this as a personal altar. Every object placed on this ‘altar’ will have a specific meaning for you. In my sacred space I have representations of my Wisdom Council/personal board of directors, the people and situations I am praying for, symbols of the work that I am currently focusing on, a candle which I light when I am in prayer and meditation, a picture that represents safety, and a small wooden box holding small pieces of paper where I have written issues that I am asking for clarity, resolution or inspiration. I also have in my sacred space personal items I use for my own spiritual practice (such as prayer beads, incense and chimes).



You might wish to take a picture of your sacred space. This creates a ‘portable altar’ you can carry with you when you are away from home so you can connect with your sacred space at any time.

Renewing and cleansing your sacred space on each New Moon is a wonderful way to keep your intentions and commitment for your life.

Any questions or comments? Feel free to contact me: Carolyn@drfaivre.com