

Seeking & Receiving Peace

Kitty Cleveland

Hi, friends, and welcome back. This is Kitty Cleveland, and I'm so glad to be with you this second week of our advent retreat, the Pray More Novenas Healing Retreat, and it's great to be back with you. Today our theme is peace. Receiving the peace that only Jesus can give. And so I want to start with a prayer. This was written by Thomas Merton in a book called "Thoughts and Solitude." And I saw it yesterday and it just really, I think, sums up where so many of us are right now in our spiritual walk.

Opening Prayer

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think I'm following your will does not mean that I'm actually doing so, but I believe that the desire to please you does, in fact, please you, and I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always. Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are ever with me and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen."

So, let's pray right now together for that peace that surpasses all human understanding. So, ask our mother to obtain that for us. She obtains for us all of the graces and blessings each day from the heart of God. So, let's pray together.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

A Moment at Mass

Now and at the hour of our death, the two most important moments, right? Right now, mama, I need your help. So, and our death. I think one of the things that's stealing people's peace the most right now is the fear of death. And so, we're called to trust. Consecrate your death to Jesus in your own words, the moment of your death, the manner of your death, and of those that you're concerned about, your loved ones, and trust it to Jesus. He's going to be with you and He's not going to let anything happen to you without His permission. It's whether His active will or His permissive will. So we can be at peace about that.

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So today I went to mass, and I was really struck during the Agnus Dei right after the consecration. Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world have mercy on us. We ask Him that twice. And then what do we say? Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace. Grant us peace. It struck me.

That's really right then at the heart of the mass after the consecration of the Eucharist. We acknowledge that He's full of mercy and takes away our sins. And then we ask Him for peace. There's a connection between the remission of our sins and having peace. We talked about it last week. Why will we fear death if we know it's the doorway to being with God? If we're at peace with Him.

Keep Your Peace

So, I'm reading a little book. I just love this book. I would encourage really everybody to get it because they're so packed with wisdom and they're small, which I appreciate. But it's called, "Searching For And Maintaining Peace" by Father Jacques Philippe. "A Small Treatise on Peace of Heart." Look, this is just a typical page for me. There are more things not underlined than underlined. It's full of stars and notes, but I made this note in the margin. If you love God, and if you're here, you love God. The devil will try to disturb your peace and God will help to restore it. The most important thing when we lose our peace, and we will is to get back to peace.

My spiritual director said that he takes his Rosary, and he just goes, Jesus, Mary, Jesus, Mary, Jesus, Mary, Jesus, Mary. And then he's just a little boy between the two of them and asking them to take care of it. And he said, now it only doesn't even take him a decade and he's back at peace. So maybe you can try that one for yourself as well. But he also says, "If your heart is far from God, the devil will try to tranquilize you." He doesn't want to disturb your peace. He wants you to stay in your sin that feels really good on a superficial level, whereas God will try to trouble your conscience.

And so, if you're not at peace, perhaps it's because you're in sin, but it could also just be that the devil is trying to steal your peace and we need to see what he's doing because the Lord wants to give you the peace that surpasses all human understanding. That is in. Let me grab my verse. John 14:27. ***"Peace, I leave with you. My peace I give to you, a peace the world cannot give. This is my gift to you."*** It's a gift from the heart of Jesus for you. It has your name on it. "Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid." John 14:27.

Now that's pretty hard, isn't it? When we're living in this culture, when we have our cell phones. My goodness, I was scrolling through the headlines earlier today. Lost my peace. And then I sat down to do this recording and the dog started barking. So, I had to start again. And then I was

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doing, I thought pretty well, and then my neighbor started the leaf blower. And so I said, Lord Fiat. I choose this. I'll start again. I guess that you want me to do this again and say something differently. And so here I am again. This is actually take four or five. God knows what He's about. And all I can do is just say Fiat. I choose this, right? Whatever you want, Lord. Whatever you want. The results are up to Him. I just do my best. I bring my meager loaves and fishes and the rest is up to the Holy Spirit.

So, one of the reasons we lose our peace is because we think it's all on us. We have to figure everything out. We have to be that big boy or that big girl and be independent and strong. But the Lord says, you have to become like little children to enter the kingdom. So, we have to unlearn some of that and learn to become totally dependent and at peace with whatever He permits.

Last week, I was mentioning my dad's story, how he was sent to prison for 10 years for crimes he didn't commit. And then how we lost the appeal. And at that point, my dad surrendered. He knew he had seven more years in prison. He knew he could not anxiously, he'd have a heart attack with the same intensity, he just kept begging God to let him go home, with anxiety. And so, he said, please just give me peace. And when he surrendered, he felt this peace, this grace bubble descend upon him and envelop him in this warm embrace. And he lived alone with Jesus in the middle of hell. The circumstances no longer determined his peace.

My Father's Story

He might get upset with some things, but he went right back to Jesus, and it was a powerlessness that he had to embrace. Saint Paul says, "When I'm weak, then I am strong." Why is that? Because then God is our strength. We recognize the reality that we really have very little control over circumstances, that it's really up to God and His will for your life. And He wants us to trust in Him and depend upon Him. And so, my dad, he had a long haul still ahead of him. And he was so purified by this whole experience. So humbled by it. He'd been sort of larger than life, kind of everybody else's Messiah, the swashbuckling lawyer in the courtroom, loved defending the little guy. Now he was the little guy. He didn't like it. But he grew in wisdom, in humility, in love, in trust, in peace.

And then we got word that the United States Supreme Court wanted to hear his case for hearing. Statistically impossible. They get over 80,000 applications a year, take fewer than 60. And his was one of them. And so we decided to ask the trial judge to let him come home while we waited for that hearing, which was still several months away. And she kept delaying the hearing, but then she finally said it on the Thursday between Easter Sunday and the first official Feast of Divine Mercy in the year 2000 when Saint Faustina was going to be canonized.

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Now, you know, if you remember from last week, I saw the divine mercy image while they were reading the guilty verdicts against my dad. It gave me peace, even though I was in a lot of pain and grief. And at three o'clock on Easter Thursday, she ordered my dad released from prison pending the hearing with the Supreme Court. Six months later, the United States Supreme Court unanimously reversed his convictions. Wow, what a day? What a day? And so that whole story, my whole testimony is on YouTube. You can find it on my YouTube channel, cause there's a lot more to the story.

And ultimately my dad was home for only three years when he was diagnosed with cancer at 60 years old and given three months to live. Now he would have died in prison had we not had our little divine mercy miracle. And then somehow by God's mercy, he gave us three more years with my dad. He was able to meet my little girl whom we adopted from China. He was able to baptize her because he was a Catholic deacon. That was very special. And it was the first time he had done anything as a deacon in many years because he had to resign as a deacon so as not to cause any scandal because of all of the details with the trial and the convictions. And he started getting really sick.

He had small-cell carcinoma that had spread to his bones, very, very painful, but he was at peace. And had made his peace with God, had made his peace with lots of family members. It was beautiful, beautiful death. And I mentioned to you all, or a part of the story is that 2 Corinthians 12:9 is that, *"When I'm weak then I am strong."* That's a very, very special verse to ponder, to meditate on when you're feeling powerless in difficult situations, to recognize that that's when God gets to be God, you can trust in Him. And that ended up being the reading the day my dad came home to die in hospice care. So, we thought he was going to die that day.

A few days later, he was still alive, and he said, "Kitty, why am I still here?" I said, "I don't know. You keep rallying. Cut it out. We'll see you on the other side." Again, peace. Difficult. Death is painful, but the Holy Spirit gives us that abiding peace when all is right with God. And my sister went into labor that day with her child because of the stress, and my mom got permission to go with her to the hospital. She kissed my dad goodbye not knowing if she would see him again. And then she got a phone call. The Archbishop has just reinstated Carl as a deacon. And we told my dad, he said, "Wow, God is good." God is good. God is faithful. He knows what you're going through. He's gonna make it all work for the good. And He wants to give you the peace that surpasses all human understanding no matter what you're going through.

Oxygen for the Soul

I invite you if you're really struggling right now, just to get on your knees if you're able and to lift up your hands and to say, Jesus, I give it to you. I surrender. I trust you. Please give me peace. Please give me your peace. And don't forget to pray every day, it's oxygen for the soul.

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Y'all come join us for the Rosary. We would love to have you, and before I forget, I just want to say, my dad did pass away nine days later, and it was an incredible celebration of his life at the end. A life that had been made so much more efficacious because of what he had suffered with the Lord and pass that on. I wouldn't be doing this if it weren't for what my dad went through. So, trust in the Lord, He's got you.

So, I want to invite you to join us for the Rosary on Instagram and on YouTube. 6:00 a.m. Central Time every weekday morning. We also have a Facebook group. So, I'll post links to all of that. But whether you do it with me or you do it alone, or with your family, please I encourage you to pray the Rosary and to get to mass. All right, friends, I've got more songs for you. "God Will Provide" is one that I wrote for my warriors out there, and also just a great reminder, and then, "God Alone is Enough," written by John Michael Talbot based on St. Teresa of Avila's bookmark. All right, my friends, this is Kitty Cleveland signing off until next week. Let's close with a prayer.

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord Jesus we praise you for everything, even the things that are difficult, Lord. We say Fiat, we ask you for the gift of peace no matter what our circumstances are. All things here are passing, and we know the enemy wants to steal our peace, and so we say no to him and we say yes to you, Jesus. We praise you now because we know that you're working it all for the good. And Lord, if there's something we're meant to do, please inspire us. Holy Spirit guide our steps, guide our words. We entrust all of our family members and loved ones to you. We pray for peace in our homes, peace in our hearts, peace in the church, peace in this world that so needs you, Lord, and may we be instruments and channels of your peace. Amen. And with the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I'll post a link to that song, "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace," that one too. So next week, we're doing Mary and the heart of the Trinity. That's our home, that's our destiny. All right, my friends. Kitty Cleveland, see you next week.