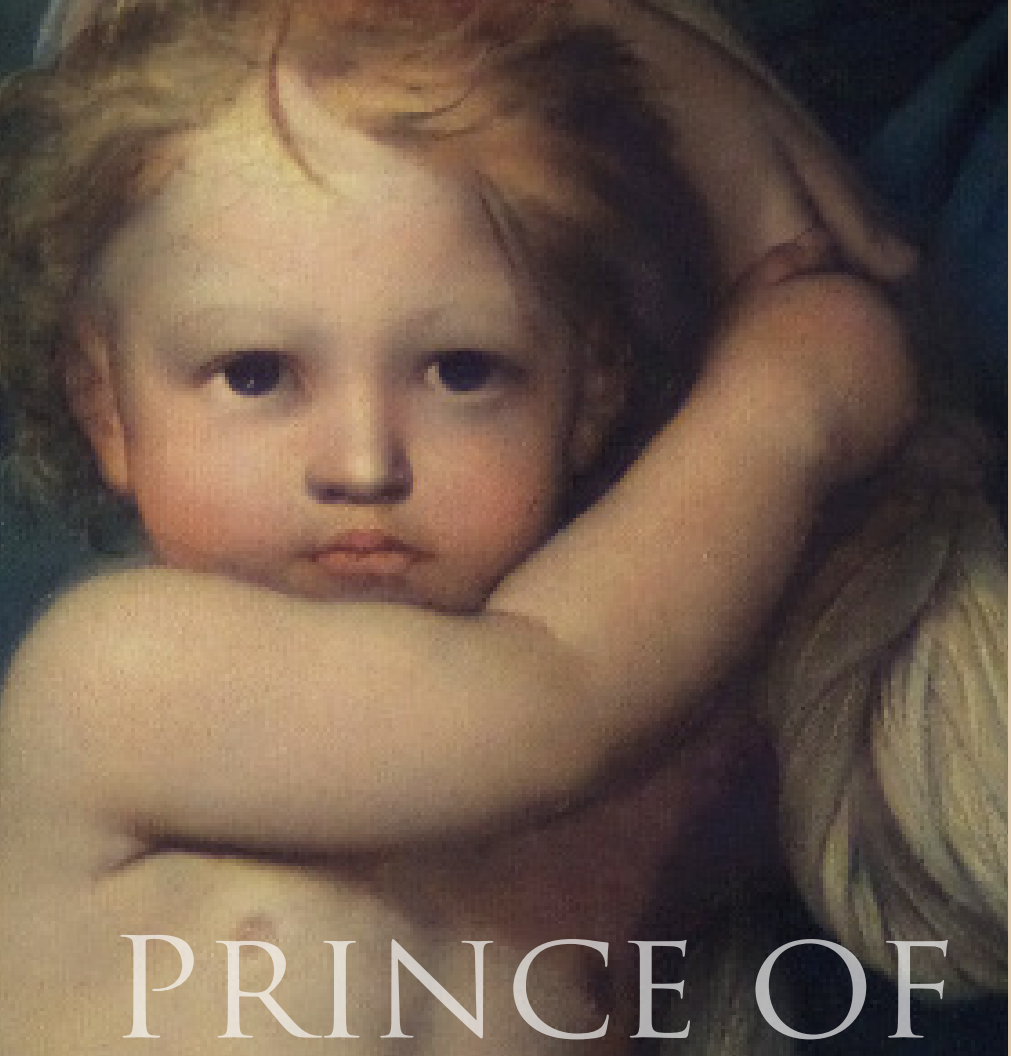
# IMPRINT



# PEACE

Where do we find it?

A PUBLICATION OF THE SISTERS OF LIFE / WINTER 2022 ISSUE



# PRINCE OF PEACE

## Ponder this:

It is astounding to ponder that the One who fashioned the galaxies out of nothing became Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace, born in the cold darkness of a poor Bethlehem stable. In this, His great desire is to restore us to Himself and heal our peace: "My peace I give you" (*Jn 14:27*). Let us allow Him to enter our lives and relationships and to bring peace where there is darkness, anxiety, or confusion.

May our Infant Lord, the Prince of Peace, free you from all fear, and bestow upon you and your family the gift of deep peace this new year. Know of our heartfelt prayers for you and your loved ones.

In Christ, Our Life,

Mother Agnes Mary, SV

## Making space for Peace *- by Sr. Mary Casey O'Connor, SV*

We can spend a great deal of time, energy, creativity, and money seeking to possess and maintain peace in our lives. From organizing and reorganizing, to mountain-top and seashore getaways, to beautiful music, the human being is desperately in search of peace. We long for order, tranquility, and unity. We ache to be at rest, free of worry. In the deepest recesses of the heart, we want to believe that all will be well.

Yet how often our valiant efforts and endless searching have left us discouraged and doubtful that true peace exists, let alone lasts. The peace that is understood as the absence of stress or tension, or a pleasant feeling or emotion, can change without warning or be ripped from our hands, no matter how firm our grasp is. Peace seems here today and gone tomorrow, yet we want it forever.

But Jesus promises us a peace that the world cannot give us: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (*Jn 14:27*). Peace is a gift; it is given to us by Jesus Himself. "He is our peace" (*Eph 2:14*). Peace is a person, namely Jesus Christ. His very presence is the peace we seek. We need to search no longer; we have been found by the One we long to find. Do we trust Him enough to invite Him in?

Jesus awaits our permission to pervade every ounce of our lives. He wants to penetrate to the depths of our unique hearts and flow through every detail of our day. He is a presence that is in search of a space — a space that we must actually give Him. Though we cannot create peace, we can create space: a space for Him to come and dwell in and with us, a space where we can come to believe that we are not alone, a space where He is given permission to order and reorder all the details, relationships, and desires of our life.

True peace comes when we give God permission to live in us, act in us, and lead us. A sure recipe for peace is more of Him and less of us. This means, before all else, living in a state of grace and regularly receiving His love in the sacraments. If our hearts are blocked by sin, we can't receive the gift of His peace. Peace is a person and seeks a home. Dare to welcome Him in.

# Finding peace *in a stress-filled life*




## An interview

*with Msgr. Gregory Schlesselmann*

*- by Sr. Mary Grace, SV and Sr. Charity, SV*



*Msgr. Gregory Schlesselmann is a priest of the Diocese of Fargo, ND, a chaplain at St. Paul's Newman Center at North Dakota State University, the director of the Diocese of Fargo's permanent diaconate formation program, and a good friend of our community.*

### What's the secret to finding peace?

This is a reality we all face – whether newly-converted or long-time disciples – namely, the experience of lack of peace in our lives. So often we feel like we are trying our best, but our best doesn't seem to be good enough to find peace. The result is stress, anxiety, fear, or just overall sadness.

Peace in our hearts is found when we are in harmony with the order God intends for us – when we are where we are supposed to be. It doesn't mean everything in our lives needs to be perfect – we just need to be moving in the right direction.

To find peace can be very simple. We should simply ask God to lead us back into peace or to increase it. The first gift of the Risen Jesus was peace (*cf. Jn 20:19-21, 26*). It helps to adopt healthy interior habits, like relying upon God in everything.

### What does relying upon God in everything look like?

We can talk about it by imagining two pathways: one is a dead end, and the other is the Way of Life who is Jesus Himself.

First let's consider the dead end, like a dead end that we might end up on while driving. It's a pathway that doesn't allow us to reach our destination – a false route. In the spiritual life, this is what self-reliance entails. Something's not working, and we ask, "What's wrong with me?" We think we can't talk to God about this, so we just talk to ourselves about it and try to figure it out in a billion different ways. I get an idea, and I try harder. And of course, we fall flat on our face again. So, the end result of this cycle of experiencing "I can't" is that I just get more drained, more fatigued interiorly. The enemy shows up, and he says, "You are a loser. You are unloved and unlovable." That's a profound lie of course, but we can come to that conclusion easily when we rely upon ourselves. And we end up without peace. Ultimately, self-reliance is self-centered and self-saving.

But oddly enough, with all sincerity, we may think that's what God actually expects of us. That's one of the most common statements I hear. People say, "Well, doesn't God want me to do that?" We have the tendency to think sincerely that we are called to figure life out and then to fix whatever is wrong with it. We believe that all He does essentially is give us the package [of my life] and somehow grace is working in there somewhere. We're supposed to take the package and run with it and ... that's actually not Christianity; that's actually not the Gospel. In fact, it represents an ancient error that attempted to assert that we didn't truly need grace for salvation. But self-reliance is not what He's asking. Because eventually self-reliance might get me to that point of, "I'm outside of love." And that's not true.

On the contrary, the true pathway is the Way of Life which is Jesus Himself. This is the pathway that does lead to my true destination. What does this look like? First of all it entails a humble awareness of and basic acceptance of my brokenness, my poverty, my inability to save myself. Jesus Himself said it clearly: "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (*Jn 15:5*). On this pathway, I put my faith in the truth that God saves me here and now, at every moment of my life and in every situation. Fundamentally, I believe that it's not up to me to save myself! Because of that, I need to seek His wisdom about what is happening and welcome His loving action solving my problem, healing my wounds, guiding

my life, in short to welcome Him saving me. By relying upon God in this way, I can experience victory and encouragement, and this leads to peace.

This is good news because it means that I don't have to rely upon myself. And this is especially uplifting when our experience tells us that we just simply can't save ourselves. Jesus never said, "Go forth and figure your life out. Go forth and save yourself." Instead, reliance upon God invites us to be real by going to the Savior who can do all things, "for nothing is impossible for God" (*Lk 1:37*). Reliance upon God can sound like this in our hearts: "Jesus I can't do this. This is impossible for me. That's okay because, Lord, You've got this. You can do anything. Nothing is impossible for You."

### You mention "poverty" – why is it so important for us to pay attention to it?

Everyone experiences it in some way. This poverty can be anything that causes us to be blocked, where we feel defeated, where it's difficult, where it doesn't seem to work, where what we hoped for didn't happen. It's anytime we say, "I can't do this."

God allows us to experience our poverty to remind us of two important truths: we are creatures who are utterly dependent upon the Creator, and we are sinners in need of God's loving mercy to save us.

We need Him and nothing reminds us more effectively than our poverty. When we seem to be doing fine and are in fact being carried by the Lord we can mistakenly think, "I've got this." But He doesn't want us to believe that lie and get confused. He's not asking me to have my life under control. He's God, and He's got this. That's what He wants me to believe.

### How can we practically rely on God?

First, be aware of our interior lives. The great problem of our modern culture is that we are unaware. We're distracted by things going on around us, we're not paying attention to what's actually going on inside of us. We need to notice our real experience. As a unique person, each of us actually experiences life in a unique way.

We need to ask ourselves: What is actually happening in my heart? What do I physically sense and feel? We always have thoughts in our mind. What are they? What am I desiring? What do I want?

Awareness should never be done in isolation. What I need to do is recognize that I'm actually not alone in my experience. God has, by virtue of the gift of Baptism, taken up residence in me. He is more present to me and to my unique experience than I am. So, if I'm going to notice what's happening on the inside, I should notice it with Him.

### How do we do that?

Describe to Him in a direct way what you are experiencing. "Jesus, this is what I am experiencing." He's right there in our hearts, in fullness of His being, His infinite wisdom, His unconditional love for you. He is willing to do whatever it is He needs to do to save you.

We can be honest with Him because He loves us. His love isn't dependent on what we do. It precedes us. He's been thinking about you for all eternity. He's loved you long before you ever showed up. And you did absolutely nothing to earn it, nothing that in any way caused Him to love you. Period. It's utterly dependent upon Him and not us. The idea is to tell Him [everything].

### So, once I describe my experience to Jesus, what should happen then?

Have a dialogue with Him. You talk, and then He talks. We're often talking to ourselves, trying to work through a problem, trying to work something out. But Jesus is right there. Just talk to Him. We can ask Him two questions: "Jesus, what do You think about all of this?" And, "What do You want to say about what I just told You?" We should avoid at all costs trying to put words in His mouth. Even though He's not going to contradict Scripture or the Church's teachings, He is God, and He's infinitely creative and knows what to say at this particular moment in your life. He might even change the topic.

We can be honest with Him because He loves us. His love isn't dependent on what we do. It precedes us. He's been thinking about you for all eternity.

Then make the effort to listen. And see what He says. If you can't hear Him, say, "I can't hear You." He infinitely wants you to receive and hear Him. Then ask, "What do You want to do, Jesus?" Salvation is all about cooperating with what He is doing. We end with abandon; we put it in His hands, entrust it entirely to Him. Then, just follow Him, abide with Him, live life with Him as He leads you along the homeward path.

### What happens when we start relying on God for everything?

We find peace and the relief of burdens being lifted from our shoulders. Amidst the uncertainties and challenges, we can be deeply at peace knowing in faith that God has us in His loving hands and will take care of everything. We experience being provided for and loved unconditionally.

We are not called to be channels but reservoirs – helping others by being filled up and then overflowing. It's about receiving so profoundly from God that there's so much of Him and His peace that it spills over. He's doing it through me, in me, for me. We allow Him to give Himself to us first so that we become a gift to others. The fruit of giving our lives to God by relying upon Him is deep peace. Would that not be a marvelous gift to those around us?



**Our new postulants:**
*(back left to right) Anna, Katie, Mary, Marissa, Maggie*
*(front left to right) Tierney, Madeleine, Carla, Jaclyn, Mary Ellen*

# What helps you abide in peace?

### Carla
**Hometown:** Albuquerque, NM
**Studies:** Special Education, Elementary Education, Educational Leadership
**Interests:** Family, basketball, movies, Hispanic food, baking, guitar, games
**What helps you?** Receptivity; resting in the Lord's love; the present moment; trust, patience, and gratitude.

### Anna
**Hometown:** Loughguile, County Antrim, Ireland
**Studies:** Medicine
**Interests:** Singing and Cadbury chocolate!
**What helps you?** Praying the rosary.

### Mary Ellen
**Hometown:** Beatrice, NE
**Studies:** Financial Services
**Interests:** Crafting, long walks, baking, lake activities
**What helps you?** Remembering the good that God has done in my life and trusting that He will continue to be faithful.

### Tierney
**Hometown:** Hinsdale, IL
**Studies:** Theology, Liberal Arts Studies
**Interests:** Sports, reading, crafting, writing songs, and children's stories
**What helps you?** Remembering the salvation history of my life and singing in community.

### Katie
**Hometown:** Hunter River, PEI, Canada
**Studies:** Psychotherapy, Counselling, Spirituality
**Interests:** Cooking, crafting, painting, gardening, event-planning, mysteries, the human person
**What helps you?** In difficult moments, finding ways to remember how I'm already held by Love and how He's working for our good.

### Jaclyn
**Hometown:** Newtown, PA
**Studies:** Nursing
**Interests:** Traveling, writing, sports, guitar, photography, cooking
**What helps you?** Resting in my identity as a beloved daughter under the loving gaze of my Father.

### Maggie
**Hometown:** South Bend, IN
**Studies:** Nursing
**Interests:** Singing, playing ukulele, dancing, writing
**What helps you?** Prayer. Being in nature — especially by water — in silence or with music.

### Marissa
**Hometown:** Coquitlam, BC, Canada
**Studies:** Linguistics, Psychology, Speech Language Pathology
**Interests:** Running, biking, Highland dancing, fall leaf crunching, cookie dough munching
**What helps you?** Silence. It grounds me in the truth of His abiding presence and gaze of love.

### Mary
**Hometown:** Calgary, AB, Canada
**Studies:** Financial Analysis
**Interests:** Basketball, camping, skiing, guitar, eating ice cream
**What helps you?** Knowing that Jesus is constantly present to me, and looking to His gaze to still my heart.

### Madeleine
**Hometown:** Eugene, OR
**Studies:** Business Admin., Spanish
**Interests:** Running, literature, camping, being outdoors, baking
**What helps you?** To repeat over and over the words, "Jesus, I trust in You."



# His mercy brings peace

*"I am living proof that Mary never gives up on anyone. Without hesitation, I would say it was Our Lady's intercession and the fruit of many rosaries spoken boldly by my simple and faithful mother and others, that wrestled me from the greatest darkness, and saved me by the merciful blood of Jesus. Filled with deepest gratitude to Abba, my Daddy, here is my story ..."*

# An interview

## with Dr. John Bruchalski, M.D.

- by Sr. Rose Patrick O'Connor, SV

*Dr. Bruchalski is a physician specializing in women's healthcare, the founder of Tepeyac OB/GYN clinic, and a dear friend of our community who has helped us serve pregnant women in need.*

**Dr. Bruchalski, could you share your story with us?**

I grew up in a great, faithful, Polish home. During the 1970s and 1980s, I decided that you didn't have to quite follow the Church to be a Catholic. I thought that the Church was archaic with their morality, and I needed to bring it into the 21st century.

Once I realized that I wanted to be a doctor, I kind of moved away from God, and then I took over. I started thinking that, in time, all would recognize that abortion, contraception, and sexual liberation were necessary for women to flourish. "I have to liberate women," I thought. "I have to provide abortion on demand." And that's what I learned to do. Yet, as I bought into the lies of the world, I became irritated, confused, less at peace.

It was at that time, at the end of my medical school training, that a friend took me to Guadalupe, Mexico City, the hill of Tepeyac, [where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego]. While I was there, I heard a voice internally that said, "Why are you hurting me?" And I blew it off.

When you begin to move away from Christ, you become sort of "schizophrenic" — you become two-faced, irritable, not peaceful. And so I went on to residency, where I learned to do first-, second-, and third-trimester abortions. We were a contraceptive research and development center, so I learned about IUDs, pills, and sterilizations. We were also an in-vitro fertilization center — the home of the first "test-tube baby" in the country. I learned to build embryos; [the way we saw it,] they really weren't human. They were "pre-human", or "sort of human", but they didn't quite deserve the same respect.

And it was in my internal chaos, in my irritated state, during this time that I was doing abortions, that a wonderful doctor challenged me and said, "You're better than this. I just got back from Yugoslavia where some people think the Mother of God is appearing — you need to go on retreat." I blew her off. And it was then that my mother called and said, "Hey, do you want to go to Yugoslavia with me?" Being a good Catholic lady, she just wanted to go see what everybody was talking about.

I went with her, and the reality was that my whole life came tumbling down. I had an engagement — heart to heart, so to speak, eye to eye, soul to soul — with our Lord and Savior, and our Blessed Mother. Mary said to my heart, "Go, show yourself to the priests," and even though I had left the Catholic Church many years earlier, I knelt down in a parking lot outside in the middle of the winter, and I went to confession.

**How did that moment change the trajectory of your life?**

When I came off the hill in Yugoslavia, I realized I was serving two patients — the mom and the child. I began to believe health is based on relationships — sacrificial relationships — in the doctor-patient, in the patient-family, and between us and our Lord. Medicine was an act of mercy. It wasn't a business, it wasn't a service, it wasn't a job; it was sacrificial care of patients. It was mercy, like housing the homeless and clothing the naked.

> Jesus took me back. He was waiting for me. He forgave me. He freed me from my guilt and anguish. He embraced me. He showed me His Abba's Heart.

So, in 1994, I started Tepeyac OB/GYN. We do 500-600 deliveries a year, and we partner with pregnancy centers. We are supported by Divine Mercy Care — an organization that tries to help us see women of all races, creeds, and economic statuses, whether or not they can pay. We've been able to talk at medical schools. We love our perinatal hospice program, and we work closely with children with Down Syndrome and provide real options.

**What would you say to women who have experienced abortion in their lives?**

I took innocent lives ... knowingly. Jesus took me back. He was waiting for me. He forgave me. He freed me from my guilt and anguish. He embraced me. He showed me His Abba's Heart. His mercy flowing from His open Sacred Heart gave me the peace to see myself as I am — His son, redeemed and beloved. It happened. At that moment I was changed forever.

Right now, I pray that you know deep in your gut God's closeness to you at this moment of pain, uncertainty, and chaos; that you know His unconditional love for you. He is offering you and me His forgiveness, His healing of our bodies, our emotions, and our memories.

You are His daughter forever, and He loves you – not for what you do or don't do – but for who you are, His baby girl. He desperately wants a real relationship with you, always desiring to meet your needs. His love is that He died for you, and His death offers you forgiveness for all the pain and sins you have been a part of. Ask for it. Cry out if you must. His Resurrection offers you healing and hope

because He gave you His Spirit, the fire and passion of His love and mercy. Nothing you feel or have done can change His love for you, His daughter, or the child He called into life inside you.

**How should we approach those with whom we disagree?**

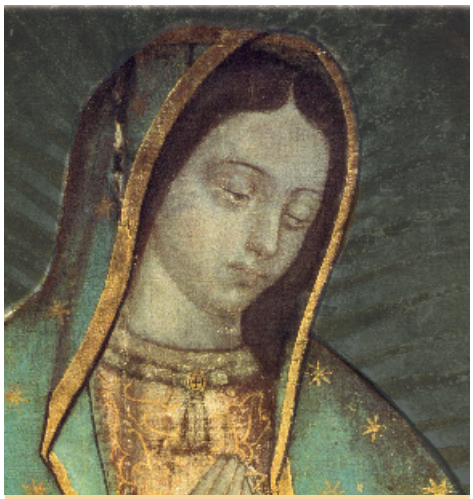
With those who promote abortion, you have to see they're trying to love, they're trying to do the right thing, but Father forgive them for not doing that. We are all children of the Father, we all have a glimpse of that light in us — every one of us — including those who persecute the Church. And Father, forgive me for not having the faith of Paul, or of Therese, or of Catherine, or of all the great saints, to love people, to make children welcomed again. Because we can love. We can love in the concentration camp. We can love in the hospital. We can love in the office. We can love in our families. We can love anywhere the Lord puts us, because that's what He did, and that's what His mother did.

And pray. Intercessory prayer I know saved me. I know my mom and dad never stopped praying. I know those pro-life warriors who are out there, they prayed for me. Intercessory prayer is far more powerful than we could ever imagine. People say, "How did you do it?" I didn't do any of this — I'm just a little kid that's trying to follow what Mom has told me to do. And Jesus has loved me so much that I now know that I can love others and everything will be okay.

**How does receiving God's mercy bring peace in the midst of suffering?**

For me, it all revolves around returning to Cana (*cf. Jn 2:1-12*) and Tepeyac. Cana is about the truth that His mercy and miracles meet our needs and bring us hope and peace now and in the future. This is the peace that surpasses all understanding. It also involves looking to Mary as an advocate and mother and intercessor.

Tepeyac was where the Virgin Mother said, "Do not fear any illness, vexation, anxiety, or pain. Am I not your Mother? Are you not in the crossing of my arms, under the folds of my mantle? Am I not your fountain of life? Is there anything else you need?" This promise to St. Juan Diego, to me, and to all of us, was spoken by this woman, this mother of ours, who was there from Bethlehem to Nazareth to the skull that Friday evening. She is the Pieta, who lived the paradox of suffering and peace. Triumph involves pain and suffering, misunderstanding, abandonment. But somewhere there's silence – that little place where the Spirit pokes through – and you still believe that Jesus loves you. And you still believe in all the promises, that He's overcome the world. And so you do what He puts in front of you because that's what He's allowed or willed. You just embrace it. And it's not easy, but that's where it is – that's where love is found.



## Our Mother who never leaves us

*Mary is the Queen of Peace. She who bore Christ in her womb, knelt at His manger, and stood at His Cross, constantly intercedes for us and our loved ones, ever desiring to bring us to the peace of her Son. Her intercession is powerful. When we pray to her, especially through the Rosary, we should expect miracles. As she said to St. Juan Diego: "Do not fear any illness, vexation, anxiety, or pain. Am I not here, who have the honor of being your Mother? ... Is there anything else you need?"*

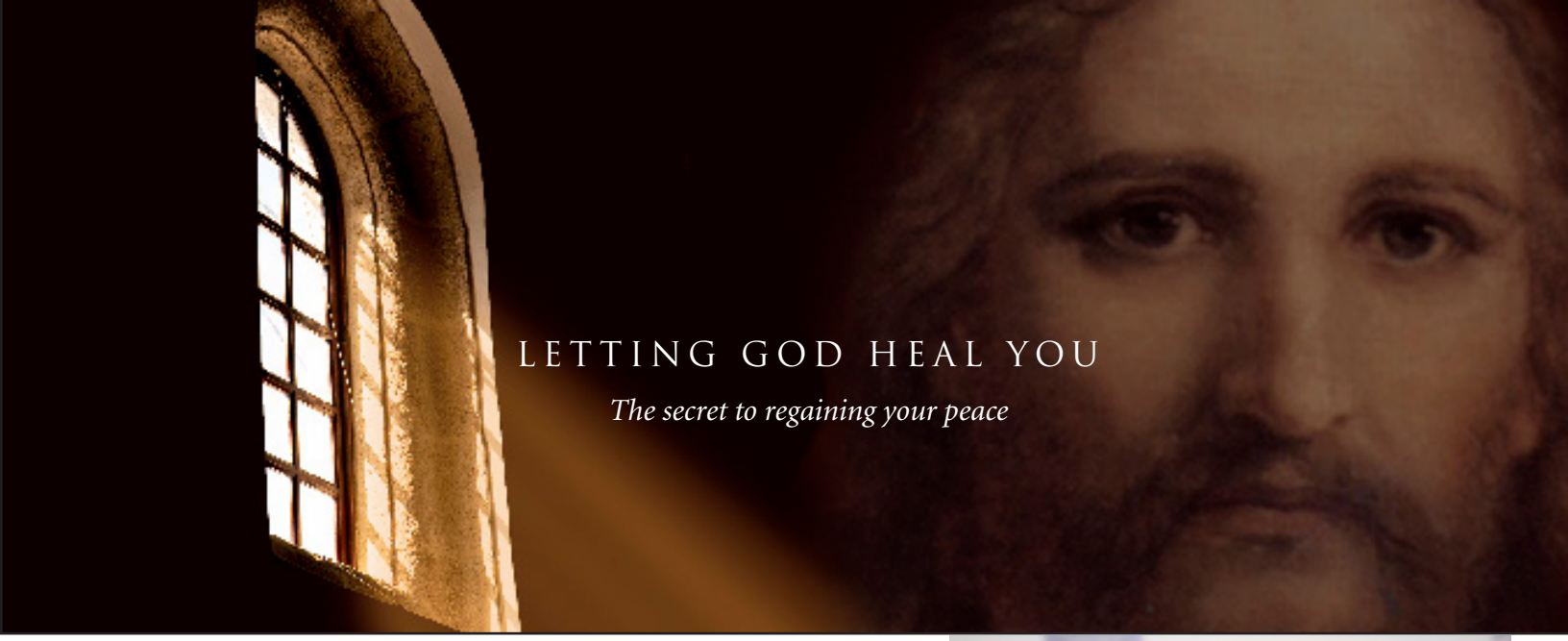
I know that suffering is an absence of some good, but you do your best as a clinician to provide opportunities for health. But in the end the common denominator of all of us is suffering. I think it's in compassion – suffering with – that we help each other here. That's how you build the Body of Christ ... walking with them, at least in my patients who have had challenges. It is not negating the pain, but walking with them through it that builds me up and gives me hope for the future.

**What would you say to people who are seeking peace in their lives?**

Take a few moments every day in your busyness and try to be silent. (I needed silence, because in the midst of the chaos I was beginning to lose my mind.) Try to turn off your technology, your cell phones and things. Start at one or two minutes and just be present. In our practice we try to help people, body, soul, and spirit. The body part is the medication, the therapies, the herbs ... whatever we need to do to help the body. And then we tell them to forgive somebody – somebody in their life they have a hard relationship with — think about ways you can meet that person and improve the relationship, mostly through forgiveness. But then as we jokingly say – or not jokingly – "There is a higher power, and you're not it!" You need to start praying, and you need to begin that prayer just by being quiet – silence. If you want to get on the path, really open yourself up to the love of Jesus ... do it for a few minutes every day and see what happens. I don't have a better answer for how to find peace in a world that is chaotic: It's the silence, a silence *with*.

*Tepeyac OB/GYN is a pro-life faith based obstetrics and gynecology practice serving the metropolitan DC/VA/MD area for over 25 years. Divine Mercy Care raises funds to provide charity care for Tepeyac OB/GYN patients in need.*

**tepeyacobgyn.com or divinemercycare.org**



# LETTING GOD HEAL YOU

*The secret to regaining your peace*

## Is it time to let God flood you with His mercy?

**What if you haven't been to confession in years?**
Jesus is waiting with open arms. We can't shock Jesus. He is not deterred by us, disgusted by us, or put off by us. *There is no sin bigger than His mercy.*

**ANALISA'S* STORY:** "Confession opened the door that changed my life. I had an abortion as a teenager. Years later, my marriage ended in divorce, and I moved to a new city. I was depressed and haunted by my past. My soul and my body were heavy. One day, I wandered into a church and saw they were having confessions. It had been years since I had gone to confession, but that day I went. And I was released. God forgave me, and our relationship was restored. For me, confession is like a family reunion with God my Father. I know that sometimes people are scared to go to confession, but if they only knew that it is Jesus. The priest stands in the place of Christ; he is "in persona Christi". Jesus already knows everything we have done. I started going to confession every month, and I decided Jesus would be my therapist. I give everything over to Him. When I go to confession, I go as a daughter looking for God, my Father. Then, I receive Holy Communion, and I am given everything. I have experienced deep peace by going to regular confession."

*name changed for anonymity





## Prayer and silence

**CARLY'S STORY:** "Silence and prayer was not a part of my life as a busy college student until I went on a retreat. With the guidance of a spiritual director, I began to pray with the Scriptures and let my mind sit in the scene with Jesus. I noticed every single time I prayed like this that I could feel Jesus' gaze upon me, and it was a deep look of love I had not experienced in this world. No matter the Gospel reading, I saw Jesus gazing upon the blind, the sick, the children, His own Blessed Mother, with these eyes of love that are greater than I could ever hope for. This is the dearest part of my retreat that I took home with me, seeing Jesus look at me with dignifying and loving eyes even when I feel I am most undeserving. Now, whenever I am in prayer or whenever I am struggling, I simply return to Jesus' gaze and soak in His love. When I spend time in silence with our Lord I am brought to a place of peace that this world can not give."

*Carly Arndt is a Senior at the Colorado School of Mines majoring in Computer Science.*

# The battle for peac

## What we are thinking about changes *everything*

*-by Sr. Beata Victoria, SV*

It's a common human experience: We're trying to focus and suddenly find our mind has drifted. "How did I get here?" we ask ourselves. "What happened to the last five minutes?" If we make an effort to retrace our thoughts, it's incredible to recognize how quickly the mind can go down a rabbit hole, digging deeply into irrelevant or undesirable topics.

What we think about is important, because our thoughts precede and help shape our actions — what we say, what we do, and how we react to situations. In the realm of thought, we're given countless opportunities each day to ponder things that lead us to Christ.

## WE CAN CHOOSE

**to engage thoughts that pop in our head – or not.**

We can all think of examples: an innocent interaction with a friend ends in an unhealthy comparison that leads to despair; a passing comment from a colleague leaves us ruminating on what they might have meant; a failed test leaves us questioning if we'll ever get anywhere in life. These things are small, but they can very quickly destroy our peace! Here's the good news: you are in control of your thoughts, and you don't need to engage every thought that comes to mind.

Thoughts exist in a vacuum, so each thought we choose not to engage needs to be replaced with another thought. When a thought comes to mind that is disturbing or distracting, we can try introducing a thought that leads us back to goodness. Saying the name of Jesus, or calling to mind a Scripture verse that brings us peace is a great way to stop a distraction in its tracks and point us back to truth.

## *Hopping on the Express Bus*

Destination: Peace

### THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

The battle for peace is won in our thoughts. St. Ignatius of Loyola developed an invaluable set of tools called the *Discernment of Spirits* that can get us on board the express bus to peace. The goal of these tools is to help us be aware of what is happening in our thoughts and our hearts; to understand what we have noticed; and to act, by either accepting the movements that are of God, or rejecting those that are not.

### Rejecting the bad. Inviting the good.

Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, there is a constant battle for your heart. Identifying the pattern of our thoughts and the movements of our hearts helps us to "test the spirits" (*cf. 1 Jn 4:1*) and ask, "Is this the voice of God?" From there, we have the power to reject what is not of God and receive what is, even if it seems to be a more trying path. Ultimately, it is God's path that will lead to peace.

THE BUS STOP

**Destination:**

Depression and Despair

One of our convents is next to a busy bus stop. Each bus that rolls by has a big orange sign, indicating its destination. As our thoughts present themselves in our minds, take note of where they're headed. Is that somewhere I should go? If not, feel free to let that bus keep driving right by you. We don't need to get on board.



# ce is won in our thoughts

**Who's voice is this?**

**DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS: The Express Bus to Peace → Map and schedule**







## What's happening in your thoughts right now?

### A. For someone moving *away* from God:

**1. The evil one –** the voice of lies, will be filled with temptations toward further sin. The evil one will try to attract the soul with promises of pleasure, telling the soul, "It's ok; what you're doing isn't that bad. Don't worry about it so much."

**2. The Holy Spirit –** the voice of truth, will tug on the conscience, encouraging one in sin to move away from vice by stirring up discontent with his/her way of life. The voice of God invites the soul to change its ways.

### B. For someone moving *toward* God:

**1. The evil one –** the voice of lies, will stir up imaginary obstacles and afflict the soul with sadness, confusion, frustration, and anxiety. This voice says, "The spiritual life is too hard. You'll never make it. You should give up and go do what you want." The evil spirit seeks to confuse, to harass and disturb peace, trying to convince us that we are not loved.

**2. The Holy Spirit –** the voice of truth, will give courage and strength to one seeking to live faithfully, inspiring the soul with consolations, courage, love, joy, and peace and removing obstacles.



*"Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."*

*- Philippians 4:8*



## The Source of our Peace is the Eucharist

*The Sisters of Life adore Christ in Eucharistic Adoration each day in all of our convents. We invite you to adore Him in the Eucharist. He is the answer to all of our longings. He is our peace.*





"I'll never forget the first time I visited Rome on my own. I remember walking into St. Peter's Square and opening my arms like I'd made it home. I was 20 years old and still unsure of what to do with my life. I thought seeing the sights of the saints and visiting the catacombs would set me right. What I didn't expect was the profound peace I found in the place I least expected it. I grew up Catholic, and Eucharistic Adoration was a regular devotion at my school. But this time I was alone and overwhelmed about all the possibilities the future could hold. I stumbled into a small Eucharistic Adoration chapel and felt what seemed like a returning embrace to my open arms. Peace filled my soul, and, though I had no immediate answers to my questions, I received much more – I felt home at last."

◀ Sr. Mary Grace, SV

## PRAYER TO THE PRINCE OF PEACE
*for the family*

**O Jesus, King of the World,**
*You entered our lives hidden and humble in a Bethlehem cave. Now, hidden in the Host, You come.*

*O Jesus in the Eucharist, let the rays of Your love flood my soul, and the soul of every person in my family. With Your saving power, Jesus, cast out all anxiety, unforgiveness, addiction, pride, impurity, confusion, hatred, and despair. Pierce the darkness with Your light and fill us with Your presence.*

*O Jesus in the Eucharist, King filled with compassion,*
**Come, reign in my family.**

*O Jesus in the Eucharist, King of infinite mercy,*
**Come, reign in my family.**

*O Jesus in the Eucharist, King who is all truth and beauty,*
**Come, reign in my family.**

*Mary, Mother of God, St. Joseph, protector of the Holy Family,*
**Help us to love Jesus and to entrust ourselves completely to Him.**

***O Jesus in the Eucharist, Prince of Peace,***
**Come, reign in us!**
*Amen.*

*[Written by the Sisters of Life]*




# Jesus Calms the Sea

## *How to pray with Scripture*

*Praying with Scripture in the way of St. Ignatius of Loyola, by imaginatively placing yourself inside the Gospels, is a powerful way to encounter Jesus and receive His peace.*

**1. Place yourself in His presence.** Be still. Simply notice God noticing you. Remember who He is and who you are.
**2. Make some act of reverence.** He is the Lord of the Universe. We use our bodies to acknowledge His presence (i.e. the Sign of the Cross, bow, etc.)
**3. Offer yourself to Him.** *Jesus, I give You all I am. I give You all my actions, thoughts, and desires this prayer time. I give You this place in my heart, this relationship, this desire, this fear, this thing that is troubling me ...*
**4. Read the passage:** *Mark 4:35-41*
*On that day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took Him with them in the boat, just as He was. And other boats were with Him. And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care if we perish?" And He awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey Him?"*

**5. Set the scene.** For example: Imagine the hills of Galilee hushed around you, the soft lap of water pink in the evening sun, the breeze warm against your face. Hear the heavy breath of the men as they push off from shore, the heave and slide of water against wood. See the birds brush across the fading sky like a ribbon, like black arrows.
**6. Ask for the grace you desire.** i.e. Peace, love, hope ...
**7. Enter into the scene.** Who are you? An apostle? Someone in another boat? See, taste, touch, hear, and smell. For example: Feel the dark water rising in a panic about you, the wind cutting sharp against your face. See the frightened eyes of the disciples, and the waves that batter and swallow and thunder. Hear the muffled cries, the disciples shaking Jesus, "*Teacher, do You not care if we perish?*" See Him rise in the darkness and speak, firmly, gently, "*Peace! Be still!*" Feel the great silence envelop you. Hear a water drop fall from the sails, and the sound of your breath, loud against the clear expanse of stars, the sea encrusted with diamonds. See Him stand before you, the water glistening in His beard, His eyes kind and clear. Rest in His presence. Stop and savor when you feel your heart move.
**8. Talk to Him.** Imagine yourself talking face to face with Jesus, your clothes soaked against your skin. How does He look at you? Let yourself meet His gaze. What do you want to say to Him? What does He say to you? *Jesus, what word do you have for me?* Listen with the ears of your heart.
**9. End with an Our Father.**

*Painting: Stephen Gjertson / Peace, Be Still / Oil on canvas, 59 x 103 inches / Saint John's Lutheran Church, Mound, MN / stephengjertsongalleries.com*



> “What we surround ourselves with and what we take into our hearts and minds has an impact on our peace.”
>
> *Brother Isaiah, C.F.R.*

# What’s Your Atmosphere?

## An interview with Brother Isaiah, C.F.R.

*by Sr. Eden Marie, SV*

**Why is music so powerful?**
Music tends to be the canvas where a lot gets worked out for me, and I think for a lot of people. In high school, I was very aware that music can affect your atmosphere … which is why, for example, you go for fast music when you go for a run. When I started to deal with bigger questions, I noticed that the type of music I listened to could seemingly help or hurt that processing. Music can filter the atmosphere; it can change the dynamic in a room and what people are feeling and sensing. It has a direct impact on the weather over our hearts.

I’ve found that trying to pray more through music – trying to listen to the Lord through music – has been a channel by which the Holy Spirit has helped to cultivate more of an atmosphere of the Kingdom of God around my life. And it makes sense, right? There’s the atmosphere of the Kingdom of God, and then there’s the atmosphere of everything else. All throughout the Bible, you have this call to song and praise, and it very often brings about change – change in the situation, change in the weather, the tide, change in what’s going on. When there’s a movement to prayer and praise, things shift — I’ve noticed that in my own life. In the Kingdom of God, we begin to taste all the fruits of the Holy Spirit that St. Paul talks about – joy, peace, gentleness, light-heartedness — even humor — patience, meekness, and all the rest (*cf. Gal 5:22-23*).

**How do you pray through music?** First recognize that God has given you your voice, and it’s beautiful, and it’s a gift. So, go for it. Second, I would say start super simple. I find in song-writing, the easiest place to begin is a “hook”. What’s the place you’re going to constantly return to — the anthem? It can help to have a chorus to carry you through the day. As I heard one rabbi say, “Some of the psalms, especially the repetitive ones, David would pray until it became a crown around his head.” I’ve always loved that — finding a hook and praying it throughout your day until the Lord makes it a crown around your head — a source of victory, a source of the accomplishment of what God is doing in your life that day. There are some great hooks in the psalms. There might be a hook there that speaks to you, like, “The Lord is my rock. I shall not be moved” (*Ps 62:6*). Then, carry it with you throughout the day, give it some notes — give it a little melody — and pray it throughout the day. Sing it while you’re doing dishes, sing it while you’re driving in the car, whistle it to yourself while you’re waiting for the bus … pray it and allow the Lord to filter the atmosphere around your heart in that way. Because your heart in that moment can turn to God, can turn to praise. And it does change the

Listen to Brother Isaiah:
https://www.franciscanfriars.com/music



atmosphere; it does change the weather. You don't need to know exactly how it does it, but the reality is that praise changes things. Holy songs can change things. So I would say start there – carrying little hooks throughout your day.

At the heart of all of this is that each of our lives is meant to be a song. God wants to filter the atmosphere around our hearts with His Kingdom, but He doesn't stop there. He wants to make us agents, filterers of that same atmosphere in the world. We're meant to be "hotspots" for the Kingdom, where we — filled with God's light, God's peace, God's truth — end up filtering an unseen atmosphere in the world. The more we become filled with the Holy Spirit and the atmosphere of the Kingdom of God, the more it becomes contagious wherever we go. We can begin to share that light just by being in the here and now — present to what God is doing — and then people can begin to see a little bit better. People can hear a little bit clearer. It becomes a little bit easier to dance and sing in God's presence. That's the whole salt/light/leaven dynamic Christ is talking about and inviting us to ... and really saying, "This is who you are, so step in. It's who you are – you are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. You are that. That's who I've made you to be."

## PRAYER HOOKS *to pray throughout the day*

Reciting Scripture verses can break unhealthy thought patterns and shift our gaze from the passing things of this world to what is eternal.

- Jesus, You take over.
- Jesus, I trust in You.
- Behold, I am with you always. *(Mt 28:20)*
- Create a clean heart in me, O God. *(Ps 51:10)*
- I keep my eyes always on the LORD.
  With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. *(Ps 16:8)*
- God, You are my shepherd, I will not want ...
  You lead me beside still waters, You restore my soul. *(cf Ps 23:1-2)*
- God, You are my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?
  You are the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? *(cf Ps 27:1)*



# Tim Holler

## How are we spending our time?

> ***God is the eternal present.*** *We do not commune with God in the past or the future, but by welcoming each instant as the place where He gives Himself to us. We should learn to live in each moment as sufficient to itself for God is there; and if God is there,* ***we lack nothing.***
>
> **-Fr. Jacques Phillipe**

How we spend our time makes a difference. Staying in the present moment is something my coach has really instilled in us. A lot of times, you get anxious about the future because you're like, "Oh my gosh, what's going to happen?" and you're imagining things. You can end up harming yourself with "mental time travel". But the biggest thing you can do is figure out when your focus is not on the present. Because as long as you can know you're not in the present, you can bring yourself back.

Where are you putting your time, what are you looking at, what kind of music are you listening to? A lot of times, I'll catch myself spending too much time on social media. There are so many different factors that people overlook. Sometimes, if you take a fifteen-minute drive with the windows down, listening to your favorite artist, you're that much better. But are you going to take the time to do that, or are you going to waste your time? Are you going to go catch a sunset, or are you going to watch some more Netflix?

For example, my good friend Matteo and I would read Scripture after practice together. And he would always ask me questions, and we would have such good conversations. We would end up talking for two or three hours. And any moment that either of us would be on our phones, we'd put them down. What we had going on was so much better than anything we were getting off of our phones.

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## 10 Tips for Cultivating Peace

- Go to confession regularly.
- Pray the rosary daily.
- Talk to Jesus about everything.
- Seek God's will.
- Forgive others.
- Practice gratitude.
- Make time for silence every day.
- Enjoy good music and good books.
- Spend less time on social media.
- Get enough sleep.

"Christ asks for a home in your soul, where He can be at rest with you, where He can talk easily to you, where you and He, alone together, can laugh and be silent and be delighted with one another."

– Caryll Houselander

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