

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



This reflection is focused on 'peace,' as we pray that each of us might experience the inner peace that is rooted in faith and trust in our compassionate God, even in the midst of suffering and challenging life changes. However, the news of these past months – war in Ukraine and elsewhere, mass shootings of innocent people, political debates about access to and use of assault weapons – necessarily broadens any thoughtful consideration of

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peace. We desire not only internal peace, but also a true peace between persons and all God's creatures: in our families, neighborhoods, cities, nations, and on earth, our common home.

The story of Servite St Peregrine Laziosi is not only about God's power to heal illness, but can also inspire our efforts at peacemaking. The young Peregrine, decades before the miraculous healing of his cancerous leg, was part of a gang during a violent time in Italy. When he assaulted members of an opposing party, which included Servite St Philip Benizi, he was deeply touched by the surprisingly peaceful and understanding reaction of Philip, amid the violence. The angry young protester became a person of peace! Undoubtedly, his confidence in the crucified and risen Christ to heal his leg, years later, had its roots in God's transformation of his whole self as a youth!

We are invited, perhaps challenged, to believe that the God to whom we turn for bodily healing can also tend the wounds of a broken and divided society, and touch the lives of people, young and older, who suffer from a sickness just as deadly as cancer, which manifests itself in hatred, bigotry, and violence. Although the news is full of tragic stories, we are followers of One who was raised to life after a violent





death, who walked through the walls of a room where his disciples were hiding in fear, and spoke a word which changed their lives...PEACE! "My peace I give to you!" Before He sends them out to mission, he grounds their relationships in peace. The breath of his Spirit transformed frightened disciples into courageous peacemakers. And despite today's many 'walls,' built to separate us or protect us from what threatens us, there is no obstacle, no political fight, no illness or hospital wall, and no barrage of tragic news which can stop the Risen Christ from passing through any personal or societal barricade, to offer us that same gift of peace and reconciliation! Pope Francis wrote, "May we be won over by the peace of Christ! Peace is possible; peace is a duty; peace is everyone's primary responsibility!" You and I, then, are to be peace, as Philip was to Peregrine, and as



work to transform systems and structures that inflict suffering on any creature. For building peace is not just foreign policy, but 'interior spiritual politics.'

Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. In my discernment of God's call, how is God calling me to bring peace to the world?
2. Where do I need the peace of Jesus most in my life? Why? How can God help me in this?

Vocation Directors

Fr Donald Siple, OSM
donaldsiple@servitesusa.org

Mr Eddie Murphy
vocations@servitesusa.org

follow



Peregrine then witnessed to others, and still intercedes for us in healing divisions as well as bodies.

The peace offered by Jesus, however, is not merely an absence of conflict, or a calm feeling inside. In the Scriptures, peace is the more embracing 'shalom,' a wholeness consisting of mercy, goodness, joy, and right relationships: with oneself, other persons and cultures, the Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part. It's God's dream for the world as it should be, nothing missing, nothing broken, everything made new and whole. Does this sound too good to be true? Perhaps, especially to one who is a victim of violence or who feels isolated because of illness. But, along with St Paul, "we are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair...struck down, but not destroyed." With faith that Christ's peace/shalom is even fuller than an end to violence, we pray for a conversion of heart against any form of violence, and we

Violence and peace first clash in the human heart. Peace requires people who are at peace internally and who can be its ambassadors. No matter the external circumstances, we are asked to bring to the world the peace that reigns within. Those of us who suffer in any way may become the most energized of pray-ers for an end to all forms of suffering, and for the healing of all creation. But can we really make a difference in areas of social justice, disease, war and the environment? If it makes a difference to any one of us, it's making a difference to the world we live in. There's only one way to find out! Let us ask ourselves what we are for, and not just what we are against. The empowering Spirit is still with and in us. Blessed are the Peacemakers in our world!

- Fr. John Fontana, OSM

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