



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE US SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

Contemplation: The Way to Peace

Our little human minds and hearts can sometimes become so bound up in worry and anxiety that we find it difficult to act; difficult even to know what actions to take. We pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and then wonder, with even more anxiety, when our prayers will be answered. This is no less true for us than it is for the neighbor, whose troubles often greatly exceed our own.

Jesus understood this tendency of ours; He understood us, telling us to [“let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day”](#), not to be anxious about material needs, but instead to concern ourselves first with God’s kingdom. But what about the neighbor, whose troubles are many times beyond our ability to alleviate, at least in any permanent way. We’re called to share their suffering, which naturally leads us to share in their anxieties. Over time this can weigh on us, making our hearts heavy, filling us with discouragement. How can we let their troubles also be enough for our day?

In sharing the face of Christ, we are called also to share the great hope that Christ offers. How can we offer this hope to the neighbor when we allow ourselves to lose hope? St. Louise de Marillac offered this advice to the Daughters of Charity, who also suffered what now call “compassion fatigue” telling them *“you will see a great amount of misery that you cannot relieve. God sees it as well ...do all you can to provide them with a little assistance and remain at peace.”* [\[SWLM, I.353\]](#)

So, we seek a way to the peace that will soothe our anxieties, but there is no way to peace. Peace is the way. God’s peace is already in our hearts, for peace is the God who made us in His image. Letting go of our anxieties and fears, abandoning ourselves to God’s will rather than our own, trusting fully in His providence; in these ways we let go of all the noise and clutter of worldly cares that disturb His peace within us. In turn, we share this peace with the neighbor through our virtue of [gentleness](#); *“our friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which mean kindness, sweetness and patience in our relationship with others.”* [\[Rule, Part I, 2.5.1\]](#)

When one person is angry, it can lead others to anger. Laughter, too, is contagious. We are created to live in community, and it is only natural for us to [rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep](#). At the same time, as our hearts connect with the neighbor, we cannot help but share God’s peace when we allow it into our own hearts.

“The kingdom of God is peace in the Holy Spirit,” St. Vincent taught. *“He will reign in you if your heart is at peace.”* [\[CCD I:111\]](#)

Contemplate

Do I allow “the day’s own troubles”, mine or the neighbor’s, to crowd out God’s peace?

Recommended Reading

[500 Little Prayers for Vincentians](#)