

The Way of Peace



READINGS FOR
A HARMONIOUS LIFE

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Introduction

Dr. Thomas Hora, a psychiatrist who taught that problems are psychological but solutions are spiritual, once asked his class, “What is the essential spiritual value parents must foster in a home for their children to thrive?”

Hands raised. “Love!” said one of the students.

Another added: “Saint Paul said there are three essential virtues. Faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love.”

The others agreed. “Love makes the world go ’round,” said one. “Love is all there is.”

“Can you sing it for us?” the psychiatrist asked. The class laughed. Then the psychiatrist asked, “Can anyone think of a quality that must be present in a home *before* love can be either given or received?”

The students were puzzled. A spiritual value before love?

“Would you like to know?” asked the teacher.

They nodded.

“It is peace.”

The students were silent. Some nodded.

“Without peace there is discord,” the teacher said. “Conflict. Even hostility. Nothing good or beautiful can come without peace.”

THE WAY OF PEACE

This is a book about peace. The peace that begins within ourselves and, like love, extends itself to others: the family, the community, the nation, the church, the earth. “Not peace as the world gives” (Jn 14: 27) but “the peace that is beyond understanding” (Phil 4: 7), the peace that “makes all things new” (Rev 21: 5).

The premise of this book is that peace of heart extends itself to peace on earth—and that none of this is possible without God.

Part One sets the table with stories, poems, and practices that help us cultivate inner peace. “We can never obtain peace in the world if we neglect the inner world and don’t make peace with ourselves,” writes the Dalai Lama. “World peace must develop out of inner peace.”

Part Two focuses on individuals from all walks of life who have spread that peace to their communities and to the world. Being interested in peace and becoming an instrument of peace are inseparable. “If one is authentic,” writes Sister Pat Farrell, OFM, “it leads to the other.”

Part Three offers prayers from all faith traditions that plant seeds of peace, in ourselves and in our world. Theologian and novelist C. S. Lewis writes, “God can’t give us peace and happiness apart from himself because there is no such thing.”

Not everyone is called to give up their life for peace as Jesus did, or to work tirelessly for peace as Gandhi did. But each of us can perform life-changing little things that eighth-grader Riva Maendel suggests in her essay, blessings that bring benevolence into the world. “Do your little bit

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of good where you are,” writes Archbishop Desmond Tutu. “It’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”

And each of us can pray for peace wherever we are.

Our favorite prayer is to close our eyes and be still—“Be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46: 10)—and then think of someone we know who needs peace, or think of people we don’t know who are desperate for peace, and pray with the voice of our soul, “I give you *my* peace. All my peace I give to *you*. All of it.” Silently we repeat. An alchemy happens. The more peace we give, the more we receive. Our well empties and fills once again to overflowing. It is the way of peace. Try it. You’ll like it.

The Way of Peace is the fifth book in a series that also includes *The Way of Kindness*, *The Way of Gratitude*, *The Way of Forgiveness*, and *The Way of Suffering*. The purpose of the series is to reassure you that spiritual values like kindness, gratitude, forgiveness, and peace reap tremendous benefits, and to offer you some inspiration for the journey. We editors have a long way to go on this bumpy path ourselves. That’s why we have chosen as our spiritual companions, and now yours, some of the wisest individuals we know or could find. We’re grateful you have chosen to stand by us on this journey. We give you all our peace. All of it.

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