



*Searching for
&
Maintaining
Peace*

A GROUP STUDY

UNPACKING THE SPIRITUAL WORK OF

FR. JACQUES PHILIPPE

SESSION 1

OPENING DISCUSSION

What do you hope to get out of this study? Why do you think Fr. Jacques Philippe chose this title for his book?



GETTING STARTED

Searching for and Maintaining Peace is a treatise on peace of heart, which has become a classic work of modern Catholic spirituality. It was written by Fr. Jacques Philippe, a well-known spiritual writer and retreat master, and a member of the Community of the Beatitudes in France. In this book, Fr. Jacques offers readers clear, yet profound guidance with emphasis on peace of soul as the primary factor in achieving spiritual growth and holiness.

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

1. To offer readers practical guidance in achieving and maintaining peace of soul in all circumstances of life.
2. To emphasize God's role and the power of prayer in obtaining and maintaining peace.
3. To identify and overcome the dangers that threaten spiritual progress and interior peace.
4. To recognize the fruitfulness of a peaceful heart.

UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK

This spiritual treasure on peace of heart brings to light practical examples of the day-to-day struggles we experience in order to achieve peace of soul, as well as the means to attain and preserve it. The author invites us to open our hearts to the power of God's grace to instill in us a profound sense of peace, and the desire to put into practice all the good works that God will inspire in us. We will discover how peace of soul can overcome the obstacles in our lives that inhibit our spiritual progress and allow us to continue on our journey without fear or anxiety, but with complete faith and trust in God.

PART ONE stresses our dependence on God to achieve inner peace and describes the fruitfulness of a peaceful heart.

PART TWO describes the ways in which we can lose interior peace, and the means to confront them with confidence and hope in the power of God's grace and in the light of the Gospel.

PART THREE is rich in spiritual wisdom from many of the saints to encourage and guide us on our lifelong journey toward achieving and maintaining peace of soul in all circumstances of everyday life.

AN INTRODUCTON TO THE INTRODUCTION

This book is built upon an understanding of the Spiritual Life which is in touch and aware of the multiple voices which clamor for our attention. The **Angel and Devil on the shoulder** is a popular depiction of this spiritual reality. Another way to tune into this is to pay attention to what rings true and is in **consonance** with the rhythm of life in accord with the will of God. What is not according to God's plan is in **dissonance**. It, too, catches our ear. An important tool in the discernment of these spirits is a **Daily Examen**. (Try the app: *Reimagining the Examen*)

NOTES:

St. Ignatius of Loyola was a great student and teacher of the discerning life. His writings are made current in a great app *Discerning Hearts*, featuring Fr. Timothy Gallagher.

THE INTRODUCTION

[Read together the preface of the book.]

SUMMARY OF THE INTRODUCTION

We live in a day and age where peace of soul is becoming more difficult to achieve due to the influences around us and the hectic pace of everyday life. As a result, we find ourselves consumed with worries and anxieties, which complicate our lives even further and affect our ability to find true peace

in God and the joy that comes from serving others. In this book, the author explains how we can achieve and maintain peace of heart by living each day and confronting each circumstance with confidence and trust in God and in accordance with the values of the gospel.

FOREWORD & INTRODUCTION

The advice offered by the saints listed in this book is a treasure of spiritual wisdom and encouragement for anyone who wishes to travel along the path to holiness.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is this day and age considered one of "agitation and disquietude"?

2. What dangers do they pose on our spiritual life?

3. Describe the way things could and should be according to the Gospel.

FOLLOW UP IN LARGE GROUP

What was most enlightening in your small group discussion?

PREP FOR NEXT SESSION

- ☐ Pray with the questions for personal reflection and living the doctrine from this week.
- ☐ Read next week's pages (3-20) and take notes.
TIP: Divide it up. Take only a few pages per day or times of day (read both in the AM and PM)
- ☐ Preview the questions for next week.
- ☐ Pray the Examen daily (remember the app).

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

How is my relationship with God at this moment in my life? Is He at the center, or have I put "other things" before Him, things that bring anxiety and unrest to my soul?

LIVING THE DOCTRINE

How can I prepare myself to receive the graces that God has in store for me through this study circle? What attitude(s) do I need to change right from the start to allow my heart to be open to His inspirations and achieve the inner peace that I seek?

SESSION 2

REVIEW OF YOUR WEEK (SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION)

1. When was your peace threatened this week?
2. How did you respond? Did you go down the rabbit hole?
Did you pull yourself out of it or didn't you?
3. How can you react next time?



STOP. DROP. ROLL.

The first step to living a discerning life is to STOP and become aware of the voices swirling. Then DROP to your knees (or at least say the name of Jesus and invite Him into the chaos). Finally, ROLL with Jesus - Continue at a different pace or in a different direction with Jesus.

INTERIOR PEACE, THE ROAD TO SAINTLINESS (p 3-20)

FEEDBACK & REVIEW OF READING (LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION)

What struck you most? What helped you most?

SUMMARY

In order to make progress in the spiritual life, first we must be convinced that all the good that we do comes from God and from Him alone. *We are powerless without God's grace.* We often have to experience failures, humiliations and trials in order to realize this truth.

The goal we should aim for in the spiritual life is not primarily to impose a lot of things on ourselves, as good as they may seem to be by our own judgment. Rather, we must try to discover the disposition of our soul, the profound attitude of our heart and the spiritual conditions that permit God to act in us. It is only in this way that we can bear fruit—fruit that will last (Jn 15:16).

The author explains that by allowing the grace of God to act in us and to produce in us (with the cooperation of our will, our intelligence, and our capabilities) all the good works that He has prepared for us, our lives will produce fruits for the good of those around us. And the more our soul is peaceful and tranquil, the more God is reflected in it, and the more good works we are capable of producing for the glory of God and the good of our neighbor.

Oftentimes, we bring agitation and unrest to our souls by trying to resolve everything on our own, instead of allowing God's grace to act in us. We must always keep in mind that His wisdom and power are infinitely superior to ours, and He knows what is best for us.

Peace begins in our heart; and without our own inner peace, we are incapable of passing it on to others. True peace liberates us from ourselves, allowing us to be compassionate toward the needs of others.

To acquire inner peace, one must continuously foster a conversion of heart and attentiveness to prayer.

Acquiring and maintaining interior peace should be considered a priority for everybody, above all for those who claim to want to do good for their neighbor. Otherwise, they would simply be communicating their own restlessness and distress.

An important reality in the spiritual life is to affirm the truth that the Christian life is a combat, a war without mercy. Every Christian must be convinced that his spiritual life is the scene of a constant and sometimes painful battle—a struggle against evil, temptation and the sin that is in him, which will continue throughout his earthly life. *However, it is the combat of one who struggles with the absolute certitude that the victory is already won, because the Lord is resurrected. It is exactly this interior peace which permits him to fight, not with his own strength, but with the strength of God. This total adhesion to Christ permits him even in the worst moments to abandon himself with a blind confidence to the One Who cannot abandon him. (The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?) Psalm 27:1*

The first goal of spiritual combat is not to always obtain a victory (over our temptations, weaknesses, etc.); rather, it is to learn to maintain peace of heart under all circumstances, even in the case of defeat. In this way we can pursue the greater goal, which is to eliminate our failures, our faults, our imperfections and our sins. This is the ultimate victory we desire, knowing quite well, however, that it is only by God's grace that we will achieve it.

All the reasons that cause us to lose our sense of peace are bad reasons that either come from the world, the devil, or our own imagination and misguided thoughts. The peace we seek is not as the world gives it; it comes from trust in the Word of Jesus.

In Jesus, we will always abide in peace, because He has conquered the world, because He is resurrected from the dead. By His death, He conquered death; He annihilated the sentence of condemnation that weighs on us. He manifested the benevolence of God toward us.

A necessary condition for interior peace is goodwill, or purity of heart. *It is a firm disposition to love God and to do His will in all circumstances, to always say "yes" to God, in the great things as in the small.* Goodwill is not perfection, nor sainthood achieved. But it is the way, because it is just this habitual disposition of heart (whose foundation is found in the virtues of faith, hope and love), which permits the grace of God to carry us, little by little, toward perfection. However, it also requires of us that we become detached from all that is contrary to the will of God on a continual basis.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

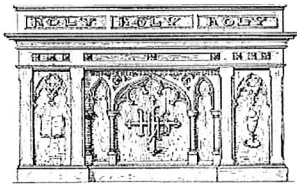
1. According to St. Therese of Lisieux, what was the best thing that God could have done in her soul? (Page 3)
2. How can we permit God's grace to freely operate in our life? (Page 5)
3. Why is peace of heart so important to producing fruits in our apostolic endeavors? (Page 7)
4. According to St. Catherine of Siena, why is spiritual combat a necessary part of our Christian life? (Page 9)
5. What is the first goal of spiritual combat? (Page 12)
6. The author explains that one of the dominant aspects of spiritual combat is the struggle on the plane of thoughts. What does he mean by this? (Page 13)
7. What is the danger in seeking peace "as the world sees it?" (Page 14)

8. Read and reflect on Jesus' words to St. Gertrude on the fruitfulness of goodwill.
(Page 19) Share a personal light or inspiration that you have received from this passage.

FOLLOW UP IN LARGE GROUP

What was most enlightening in your small group discussion?

THE MASS – OUR SOURCE OF PEACE



Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy and hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He was crowned with thorns and took up His throne upon the cross. His sacrifice is continued in each offering of the Mass. This section will examine the different parts of the Mass to appreciate how it is the source of peace for us and the world. Use a missalette to look up the canon of the Mass and all the options that are available.

OPENING RITES

The Greeting by the celebrant at the beginning of Mass follows the sign of the Cross. Look at the options a priest can use. Also, do you recall the greeting a bishop can say? How is this greeting, and its placement at the start of Mass, connected to the reading so far?

The Penitential Rite has invocations which can be used by the deacon or priest. Look for an option which mentions peace. We begin Mass by calling to mind our sins. How is this connected to Fr. Philippe's observations on spiritual combat and struggle?

The Glory to God is then sung or spoken. These are the words sung by the angels to announce the birth of the Savior. What are the opening words of the Gloria? Why are they appropriate words at the beginning of Jesus' life and the beginning of Mass?

PREP FOR NEXT SESSION

- ☐ Pray with the questions for personal reflection and living the doctrine from this week.
- ☐ Read next week's pages (23-50) and take notes. TIP: Divide it up. Take only a few pages per day or times of day (read both in the AM and PM)
- ☐ Preview the questions for next week.
- ☐ Pay attention at Mass for prayers for peace.
- ☐ Pray the Examen daily (remember the app).

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

We cannot achieve true peace without the help of God's grace. According to St. Vincent dePaul, "The good that God does is done by God Himself, almost without our being aware of it. It is necessary that we be more inactive than active." What does he mean by this? What role does humility play in my openness to receiving God's grace? How deeply do I realize that I cannot give peace to others unless I first experience peace?

LIVING THE DOCTRINE

How can I abandon myself to God with greater humility, confidence and trust, knowing that true peace lies in Him? What obstacles stand in my way? Do I truly believe that God wants me to be a saint, and that I can become one with His help?

SESSION 3



REVIEW OF YOUR WEEK (SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION)

1. When was your peace threatened this week?
2. How did you respond? Did you go down the rabbit hole?
Did you pull yourself out of it or didn't you?
3. How can you react next time?

CALL A.A.A.

Fr. Timothy Gallagher (DiscerningHearts.com) invites us to live in greater freedom by paying better attention to what is happening inside of us.

ACKNOWLEDGE the competing voices vying for not only our attention but to determine our actions.

ASSESS - is it coming from the Lord or from the Enemy?

ACT - either reject that which is from the Enemy or receive what is from the Lord.

How is this similar to the advice from last week to STOP. DROP. ROLL.?

HOW TO REACT TO THAT WHICH CAUSES US TO LOSE PEACE (p 23-50)

FEEDBACK & REVIEW OF READING (LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION)

What struck you most? What helped you most?

SUMMARY

The author mentions that the most common reason for losing our peace of soul is fear caused by situations which affect us personally, involving all aspects of our lives: our health, family, professional life, moral life and the spiritual life itself. Our worries and concerns about many things (past, present and future) bring anxiety and restlessness to our soul.

The surest way to losing one's peace is trying to rely on one's own resources or those of the world, which are limited and powerless in facing the many challenges and difficulties of life.

To preserve peace in the midst of the hazards of human existence, we have only one solution: We must rely on God alone, with total trust in Him: "Your heavenly Father knows what you need" (Mt 6:32).

Man has lost confidence in God, trying to find happiness on his own, but becoming unhappy in the process. We must regain our lost confidence by believing in Divine Providence.

The devil, who always attempts to deceive us, tries to instill in us the belief that total abandonment to God will deprive us of everything and destroy our happiness. This distrust in God is the product of original sin, and we must "reeducate" ourselves in the truth and believe with certainty that God will not take away our happiness but will leave us in peaceful possession of many things *when they are not bad in themselves and can serve His designs*.

The author brings to light two principal obstacles that prevent us from regaining our confidence in God.

1. First, many do not believe in Divine Providence because they have never experienced it, and because they never give it the opportunity to intervene in their lives. They seek to resolve everything on their own, without God and without success. We cannot experience God's help unless we give Him the necessary space to express Himself. St. Francis de Sales tells us: "The measure of Divine Providence acting in us is the degree of confidence we have in it."

2. The second great obstacle to abandoning oneself to Divine Providence is the presence of suffering, in our own lives and in the world around us. We must be convinced that God in His power and goodness will use whatever evil there may be, as well as our own suffering, or the suffering of a loved one, for our benefit or the benefit of another, and that He has the ultimate victory over evil. It is an act of faith—an invitation to believe in the power of Jesus' Resurrection as the definitive victory of God over evil.

What really inspires confidence is to contemplate Jesus Who gives His life for us and nourishes us with "too great a love" that He expresses on the cross. *"Greater love than this no man has than to lay down his life for his friends."* (Jn 15:13)

Evil is a mystery, a scandal, and it will always be so. It is necessary to do what one can to eliminate it, to relieve suffering, but it always remains present in our personal lives, as well as in the world. Its place in the role of redemption reveals the wisdom of God, which is not the wisdom of man; it always retains something incomprehensible that intervenes.

The heart does not awaken to confidence until it awakens to love; we need to feel the gentleness and the tenderness of the Heart of Jesus. This cannot be obtained except by the habit of meditative prayer, by this tender repose in God which is contemplative.

In the midst of our trials, we can experience “delicacies of Love” (consolations from God). They are not reserved for the saints. They are for all the poor who believe that God is their Father. They can be for us powerful encouragement to abandon ourselves to His care, far more efficacious than any reasoning.

If we learn to abandon ourselves with total confidence in God, in the big things as in the small, with the simplicity of little children, God will manifest His tenderness, His providence and His fidelity in a manner sometimes overwhelming.

It is necessary to abandon ourselves “completely, or not at all” into the hands of God, with the simplicity of little children, not seeking any longer to manage or “to save” ourselves by our own initiatives materially, emotionally, or spiritually. *We must be disposed to give everything to God, without panic, and to allow Him to do things His way, in total confidence.*

The measure of our interior peace will be that of our abandonment, consequently our detachment.

If we detach ourselves from everything and put all into the hands of God, God will return all to us a hundredfold. From personal experience, and to illustrate this point, St. John of the Cross shares with us that “All things were given to me from the moment when I no longer sought them.”

Abandonment is the fruit of the Spirit; *the Lord does not refuse this Spirit to those who ask with faith.*

One of the most beautiful expressions of confident abandonment into the hands of God is Psalm 23.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

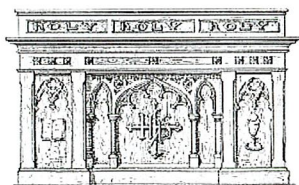
1. According to the author, what is the surest way to lose one's peace, and the only sure way to preserve it? *(Page 24)*
2. How has original sin contributed to man's loss of confidence in God? *(Page 27)*
3. Fr. Jacques mentions one important thing that is necessary to regain confidence in God. What is it? *(Page 28)*
4. In order to overcome the fear of suffering in our lives, what must we be convinced of? *(Page 31)*
5. Why does contemplating Jesus on the cross inspire total confidence in God? *(Pages 33 & 34)*

6. According to the author, why is it necessary to abandon ourselves to God completely or not at all? *(Page 37)*
7. Describe some of the devil's strategies to prevent us from abandoning ourselves completely to God. *(Page 39)*
8. If we find that we are unable to abandon ourselves totally to God, what should we do? *(Page 40)*
9. Psalm 23 *(Page 41)* exemplifies total abandonment to God in confidence and trust. Share a personal reflection or light that you received from reading this passage.
10. Why is our peace of soul tested when we experience the suffering of a loved one? *(Page 47)* What can we do to alleviate unrest and bring peace and comfort to the sufferer? *(Page 48)*
11. What is the primary motivation to aid us in peacefully confronting suffering? *(Page 49)*
12. Sometimes our suffering is caused by the faults and shortcomings of others. Give an example of this and how it should be addressed in the light of the Gospel.

FOLLOW UP IN LARGE GROUP

What was most enlightening in your small group discussion?

THE MASS – OUR SOURCE OF PEACE



Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy and hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He was crowned with thorns and took up His throne upon the cross. His sacrifice is continued in each offering of the Mass. This section will examine the different parts of the Mass to appreciate how it is the source of peace for us and the world. Use a missalette to look up the canon of the Mass and all the options that are available.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER I is also called the Roman Canon. It is the longest of the options in the Missal. It is recognizable by the lists of saints mentioned in the prayer. Look at the mentions of “peace” in the prayers of this canon. What do these invocations reveal about the original plan of order intended by God? What is the connection to purgatory?

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER III is probably the most used. It allows for the insertion of saints’ names who are specific to the parish or celebration. Look at the mentions of “peace” in this canon. Have you ever considered the universality of your prayer at Mass? How about the power of your prayers?

PREP FOR NEXT SESSION

- ☐ Pray with the questions for personal reflection and living the doctrine from this week.
- ☐ Read next week’s pages (50-82) and take notes. TIP: Divide it up. Take only a few pages per day or times of day (read both in the AM and PM)
- ☐ Preview the questions for next week.
- ☐ Pay attention at Mass for prayers for peace.
- ☐ Pray the Examen daily (remember the app).

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Life will always bring with it obstacles to overcome, whether self-inflicted or brought about at the hands of others or the culture in which we live. Whatever the case may be, we must abandon ourselves with confidence and trust into the hands of our heavenly Father, in peaceful repose, asking Him for the strength to endure all things with patience, charity and love. In doing so, we will achieve true peace, holiness, and eternal happiness with God in heaven. How firmly do I believe this? In what ways has my faith in this Christian truth manifested itself in my life recently?

LIVING THE DOCTRINE

What areas or circumstances in my life bring me the most anxiety, where I need to abandon myself more fully to God? Have I failed to resolve any conflicts in my life according to the ways of the gospel? As I progress in my spiritual life, what will I do differently?

SESSION 4



REVIEW OF YOUR WEEK (SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION)

1. When was your peace threatened this week?
2. How did you respond? Did you go down the rabbit hole?
Did you pull yourself out of it or didn't you?
3. How can you react next time?

KEY TERMS

Spiritual Combat

Goodwill

Providence

Contemplative gaze on Jesus

Abandonment

Pseudo-sanctity

HOW TO REACT TO THAT WHICH CAUSES US TO LOSE PEACE (p 50-82)

FEEDBACK & REVIEW OF READING (LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION)

What struck you most? What helped you most?

SUMMARY

Dealing with the faults and shortcomings of others requires us to be attentive not only to **that** which we want, but also to the **way** in which we want them. That is to say, our wanting must always be caring, peaceful, patient, detached and abandoned to God. A desire that causes us to lose peace, even if the thing desired is excellent in itself, is not of God. The Lord asks us to bear with patience the faults of others as He puts up with them. Why be more demanding and impatient than God?

We reach a certain point in our spiritual life when we are ready to love God with our whole heart and are confident to abandon ourselves to God with all our imperfections. However, there are circumstances where we are willing to risk losing this peace and the devil will exploit this to discourage and trouble us.

We all experience faults and failures no matter how hard we try to correct ourselves. It is not that we commit the fault and try making efforts to eliminate them, it is how we respond once we have committed that fault or failure. The sadness, anguish and discouragement we feel is not good and we must do everything we can to maintain our peace. It is a matter of knowing how and, as quickly as possible, to recapture that peace when we have fallen into sin and to avoid sadness and discouragement. This is a way in which to sanctify ourselves more rapidly.

There are a number of reasons why sadness and discouragement are not good and we need to sanctify ourselves quickly:

1. God acts in the peace of one's soul. It is not by our own efforts that we succeed in liberating ourselves from sin, it is only through the grace of God that we can attain this.
2. It is more pleasing to God that once we have experienced failure and discouragement, that we ask Him to forgive us as we have sinned again. It is by abandoning ourselves and being confident in God's mercy, we can thank God for allowing us not to have sinned worse than we already have. Through our abandonment, we become aware one day God will heal us completely. It is in this experience of our misery and discouragement from committing the sin, that we can ask God to help us to be more humble, considerate of others and make us more aware we cannot do this on our own. This is when we must rely solely on God's love and mercy.
3. The trouble, sadness, and discouragement we feel because of our failures and faults are rarely pure. We are not sad only because we have offended God, but that we have shattered our ideal image of ourselves. The pain of our wounded pride is a sign we have placed trust in ourselves and in our own strength and not in God.
4. We must not view our faults too tragically because God can draw good from them. We must have confidence in God to believe He is good enough and powerful enough to draw good from everything, including our faults and failures. We must struggle to not sin and to correct our imperfections.

If we commit evil or sin, we must fix it as much as possible. We should not distress over our fault because if we return to God with a contrite heart, good will come from it, if only for us to grow in humility and have less confidence in ourselves and more in Him. The mercy of the Lord is so great that He uses our faults to our advantage, an instrument in our salvation.

Our faults can become a source of tenderness and mercy towards others. Instead of dwelling on our fault, we should return to God immediately with confidence and thank Him for His mercy and what good He will draw from our fault. On the contrary, the devil will use our faults as a weapon to prevent

our souls from turning to God and make us lose our peace through our discouragement caused from our fault.

We must be able to determine between a true repentance and a true desire to correct our faults (which is always gentle, peaceful, and trustful) from a false repentance (that remorse that troubles, discourages and paralyzes). Not all of the ways that come to mind are from the Holy Spirit and can be from our pride and the devil. Peace is essential in discerning which spirit. Those that come from the Holy Spirit are always peaceful.

For the person of goodwill who sins, it is not so much the fault, but the turmoil it causes. He who falls and gets right up has not lost much. He gains humility and mercy. He who stays sad and wallows in his defeat, loses more. Spiritual progress is not so much never falling, it is being able to lift yourself up quickly after you have fallen.

There is a rule of conduct when we fault. We must be sorry for committing a sin or fault. We must ask God for forgiveness and ask for the grace not to sin against Him again. We should wish to go to confession. We should not wallow and be sad or discouraged. We need to recover our peace as quickly as possible and return to our normal spiritual and prayer life. It is common once we sin to want to waiver in our prayer life as we feel we are not worthy to come before God. We feel we can only approach God when we are presentable, content and perfect. This is inspired by the devil and our false humility. If we wait to be saints to pray again, it may be a long time. We need to not alter or change our prayer life.

It is dangerous to do wrong and we need to avoid it. But we are human and it is dangerous to only do good. We are born with original sin and thus prideful. When we do good, we take some credit for that ability, thus our pride. Nothing precludes true love more than this pride. If the Lord did not allow us to do wrong, we would act towards others with contempt and forget everything comes freely from God. To protect us from committing a great evil, God allows us to commit a lesser evil by committing our faults. We need to thank God because without allowing this we would be lost.

We often face unrest in decision making. Sometimes we feel a great pressure to move forward, preferring action to inaction, and so we rush to make a decision. Other times, we are afraid of making a mistake. Consider the image of making a great tapestry between heaven and earth. God hands us the needle and we pass it back. He takes care of making sure that things are looking good on His side, while all we can see is the backside. The author points out that there are *wrong* reasons for wanting certainty in decision making (p 74-75). Also, we are warned that "the devil is crafty and uses the desire we have to God's will to disturb us." One must not let him "take advantage" of us.

We will be saints the day when our inabilities and our nothingness will no longer be for us a subject of sadness and anxiety, but a subject of peace and joy.

Strive for perfection, but never become discouraged! St. Therese of Lisieux teaches us that "small things done with love and to please God are extremely beneficial in making us grow (one of the secrets of her holiness). St. Teresa of Avila also reminds us that "Patience obtains everything."

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is patience important in our conversion and in the conversion of others?

(Page 55)

2. After reaching a certain level of progress in our spiritual life, we can sometimes experience sadness and discouragement when we continually experience a fault or imperfection. The author gives four reasons why it is important for us to maintain our peace under these circumstances.

What are they? *(Pages 57-61)*

3. What advice does the author give us after committing sin? *(Pages 64-65)*

4. The author makes an important point to consider prior to making a decision.

What is it? *(Page 70)*

5. We would like always to be absolutely certain of doing God's will and never be mistaken. How is this attitude not exactly right?

(Pages 73-75)

FOLLOW UP IN LARGE GROUP

What was most enlightening in your small group discussion?

SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Jesus' appearance on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Two disciples are met walking away from Jerusalem following the painful days of Jesus' crucifixion and death. We are not told how long they followed Jesus or why they were leaving. It would be safe to say that they were in pain and confused. Had they put their trust in the wrong man? Would they try to return to their former way of life? In this time of confusion, robbed of their peace, Jesus draws near to them and walks with them. He doesn't stop them in their tracks or turn them around immediately. Rather, He enters their confusion to bring light to their darkness and clarity regarding which direction they should be walking.

Who are you called to draw near to? Can you walk in their confusion and shine the light of Christ?

Jesus asks, "What are you discussing?" He knows the answer but He gives the disciples the opportunity to fully articulate why they are walking downcast away from Jerusalem.

Pay attention to the unspoken realities with another's heart and give them a chance to articulate them.

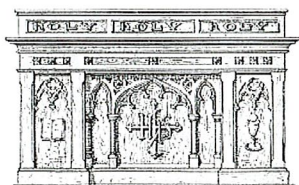
Their revelation shows that doubt, disappointment, and disbelief have taken root in their hearts. Jesus meets that with His understanding, His hope, and His fidelity.

Jesus could have revealed Himself to them directly, but He chose to allow them to grow in knowledge and acceptance of Him. This is the same pattern of God who slowly allowed Himself to be understood through salvation history. We are called to have that same reverence for the work of the Holy Spirit within others.

Reverence and patience. Reverence is given to the presence of the Holy Spirit within the other. Patience is given to the humanity that can be slow to believe or act.

NOTES:

THE MASS – OUR SOURCE OF PEACE



Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy and hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He was crowned with thorns and took up His throne upon the cross. His sacrifice is continued in each offering of the Mass. This section will examine the different parts of the Mass to appreciate how it is the source of peace for us and the world. Use a missalette to look up the canon of the Mass and all the options that are available.

COMMUNION RITE

THE OUR FATHER is so familiar that it is easy to slip into automatic mode. Stop that. Pay attention to the embolism (the priest's words after the Our Father). How are peace and mercy connected? We also ask to be "safe from all distress." What do we ask to be free from just before that? How are those two connected?

THE SIGN OF PEACE is probably the most obvious of all petitions and prayers for peace. How many times does the priest use the word peace? How is offering the sign of peace appropriate preparation for receiving communion? What scripture passage does this fulfill?

PREP FOR NEXT SESSION

- ☐ Pray with the questions for personal reflection and living the doctrine from this week.
- ☐ Read next week's pages (85-110) and take notes. TIP: Divide it up. Take only a few pages per day or times of day (read both in the AM and PM)
- ☐ Preview the questions for next week.
- ☐ Pay attention at Mass for prayers for peace.
- ☐ Pray the Examen daily (remember the app).

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Patience brings about in us a purification that is absolutely indispensable. What narrowness of heart do I need to be free from? Why is it hard for you to look at your own weakness and sin? Explain in your own words *why the only true perfection is that of love.*

LIVING THE DOCTRINE

Are you aware of any illusion that must be exposed - a pseudo-sanctity or presumption in your relationship with God? (Page 66) Do you feel like you have to "cover up" before approaching God? Do you feel an unhealthy sense of guilt that keeps you from coming to Jesus vulnerably? What does true sanctity look like?

SESSION 5

REVIEW OF YOUR WEEK (SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION)

1. When was your peace threatened this week?
2. How did you respond? Did you go down the rabbit hole?
Did you pull yourself out of it or didn't you?
3. How can you react next time?



WHAT THE SAINTS TELL US

SUMMARY

Through the lives of the saints we come to realize more fully and more perfectly that peace, which sows charity, the love of God and love of neighbor in our soul, is the road that leads straight to eternal life. *It is the greatest perfection of love that can be achieved in this life.*

They taught us by their example that true peace can only be found in God through complete abandonment to His holy will, and that genuine humility, which is a necessary condition for peace, brings contentment and peace to the soul, making it better able to serve God.

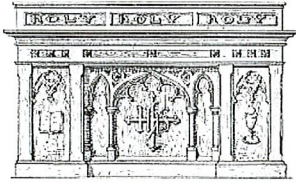
SMALL GROUP PROJECT

Each small group discuss one of the saints and report back to the large group.

“What contribution does your saint make towards searching for and maintaining peace?”

SUMMARY HANDOUT AVAILABLE

THE MASS – OUR SOURCE OF PEACE



Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy and hope for the coming of the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He was crowned with thorns and took up His throne upon the cross. His sacrifice is continued in each offering of the Mass. This section will examine the different parts of the Mass to appreciate how it is the source of peace for us and the world. Use a missalette to look up the canon of the Mass and all the options that are available.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

THE DISMISSAL is more than just a brief and polite goodbye. How is the dismissal key to understanding the Mass? Why is peace an essential part of the dismissal?

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. According to St. Francis de Sales, what three things should we do to obtain peace? *(Page 88)*
2. St. Teresa of Avila, the great mystic and reformer of the Carmelite order, is considered one of the most profound spiritual teachers in the history of Christianity. Through her holiness, she attained the highest level of union possible with God in this life. *The Way of Perfection*, one of her most cherished works, is considered a masterpiece in spiritual wisdom and insight, in particular, with regard to the spiritual battles that the enemy wages in the souls of those wishing to achieve the highest level of sanctity in this life in order to attain complete union with God. Humility is a necessary virtue in the pursuit of holiness. How does St. Teresa describe the deception of false humility, and the dangers that it poses to the soul? *(Page 95)*
3. How does St. Padre Pio define peace, and what advice does he give the reader to avoid losing this peace and serenity? *(Page 109)*
4. In your own words, why is it so important to live in the present, avoiding inordinate concern over the past and the future?

LIVING THE DOCTRINE

Throughout the history of the Church, the lives of the saints have inspired us by their examples of true holiness, and the personal struggles they had to overcome in order to achieve it. The truth is: God can make saints of all of us, despite our faults and weaknesses, with the help of His grace and our willingness to cooperate with it. In many cases, God did not choose the prepared, He prepared the chosen. He can work wonders in us if we are open to the inspirations He wishes to give us, and have the desire to live them faithfully in everyday life. How convinced am I that I can truly be a saint? Do I have full confidence in God that this can happen?

CONCLUSION OF STUDY: SHARING OF GRACES

WRAP UP – sharing the grace. What’s your one thing that will help you hold onto your peace?
A word? A tactic? One insight?

KEEPING THE PEACE

- ☐ Utilize A.A.A. or STOP. DROP. ROLL.
- ☐ Reread and revisit the book and your notes.
- ☐ Pay attention at Mass for the prayers for peace.
- ☐ Pray the Examen daily (remember the app).

RESOLUTION

What practice will you employ to maintain peace?



The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change
the courage to change the things I can
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time.
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace.
Taking, as he did, the sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it.
Trusting that he will make all things right
if I surrender to His will;
that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
and supremely happy with Him forever.

—Reinhold Niebuhr

We live in an age characterized by an extraordinary amount of agitation and lack of peace. This tendency manifests itself in our spiritual as well as our secular life. In our search for God and holiness, in our service to our neighbor, a kind of restlessness and anxiety take the place of our confidence and peace. What must we do to overcome the moments of fear and distress? How can we learn to place all our confidence in God and abandon ourselves into His loving care? Fr. Jacques Philippe uses concrete examples from everyday life and invites us to respond in a Gospel fashion to the upsetting situations we all confront. Since peace of heart is a pure gift of God, it is something we should seek, pursue and ask Him for without ceasing.

Credits: This study was developed from the guide found at rcspirituality.org