

Peaceful

Meditations

*for
Every Day in
Ordinary Time*



Weeks 1–9

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YEARS A, B, & C

Peaceful

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Every Day in
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Weeks 1–9

Rev. Warren J. Savage

Mary Ann McSweeney

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Introduction

Peace, a gift from God, is the core of our being. In our deepest heart space reside tranquillity, serenity, harmony, and complete trust in God's love for us.

In our busy lives, peace may seem to elude us. We may feel frantic with the number of tasks and obligations we face, overwhelmed with responsibilities, discouraged at how quickly time goes by and at how much we are forced to leave undone.

Yet if we take just a moment to consider what is really important in our lives, we become aware of a point of stillness in our being. That stillness is the voice of God calling us to let go of worry, anxiety, and distraction. It is the voice of God inviting us to spend time in quiet prayer, reading sacred Scripture, and meditating on how we can become more like Jesus in our everyday encounters. It is the voice of God asking us to be intentional about carrying the message of love, compassion, and peace to our families, friends, coworkers, and communities.

This book of meditations offers readers an opportunity to begin a daily ritual of reading and reflecting on sacred Scripture. It provides examples of the ordinary and extraordinary challenges life can bring and shows how the intentional imitation of Jesus can help us meet these challenges. It encourages the custom of daily prayer and suggests concrete

practices to broaden our awareness of the presence of God in all people and to reach out in peace to help those in need. We have been honored with the gift of God's peace in our hearts. We are called to cultivate that gift, embody it, and give witness to it so that others come to understand more deeply the presence of God in and around us. Each day we can practice being a peacemaker. Each day we can lessen our anxiety and increase our peace with God. Each day we can be a messenger of God's peace, love, and compassion in this fragile world.

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Weeks 1-9



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The Baptism of the Lord

First Sunday in Ordinary Time

YEAR A

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10

Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38

Matthew 3:13-17

And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

MATTHEW 3:16-17

Reflection: How often do we reflect on the meaning and significance of our baptism? To understand our baptism is to understand who we are and what our mission is in life. Baptism makes each of us a beloved son or daughter of the Triune God. Through baptism we become sisters and brothers with people from various cultures, nationalities, social backgrounds, languages, and ways of life. As children of God's family we share a common dignity, a common love, and a common vocation to be servants of God in the world. Baptism obliges us to be mindful of our

communion with God and others and to live a life that promotes compassion, love, peace, unity, and the dignity of all people.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of the Christian spiritual life is to live with baptismal awareness that our true life is with God. Such awareness will prompt us to listen to the voice of God in the Scriptures, to make time for prayer, and to show compassion to the poor. Through baptism, we enter into a sacred mystery and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to share the inner life of the Triune God, who is love. God is pleased with us when we share the gift of unconditional love with all people, bringing about peace and unity.

Ponder: Is God pleased with me and the way I'm living at the moment?

Prayer: Lord, unblock the ears of my heart that I may hear your comforting voice of love, compassion, and peace.

Practice: Today I will live with baptismal awareness and recognize the dignity of all people.

YEAR B

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 or Isaiah 55:1-11

Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 or Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6

Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38 or 1 John 5:1-9

Mark 1:7-11

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

ISAIAH 55:10-11

Reflection: At some unexpected moment along life's journey, we awaken to a voice deep inside our hearts that asks us, "What is the meaning and purpose in life?" For Christians, the meaning and purpose of life is revealed in Christ. Christ came into the world to bring all people into communion with God. His work on Earth was to share God's love and compassion with the hungry, the poor, the alienated, and the forgotten.

At baptism, we were incorporated into the body of Christ, the Church. As members of the body of Christ, we share in Jesus' mission of peace and rec-

conciliation. Our lives must be interpreted in light of the life and ministry of Jesus.

Our baptism sets us apart to carry on the work of Christ, to spread the Word of God, to comfort the afflicted, and to be God's messengers of peace and unity in broken and fragile environments. As coworkers with Christ, we must use our gifts and talents for the common good and help bring forth in our world a community wherein all people are loved and respected as children of God. Baptism reminds us that our purpose in life is to be the seed of God's peace and the bread of God's compassion to humanity.

Ponder: What is God's will for me?

Prayer: Lord, help me to discern my gifts and talents and use them for the common good of all people.

Practice: Today I will actively promote peace and unity.

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YEAR C

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7 or Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Psalms 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 or

Psalms 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30

Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38 or Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

ISAIAH 40:11

Reflection: Baptism unites people from all nations into God's flock. In this flock many suffering children need our immediate attention and care. We learn about these children—many of whom are close to death—in newspapers and magazines and on TV documentaries.

In Africa, where there is widespread famine and drought, little children cry out for food and drink. In Haiti, where there is widespread HIV/AIDS, orphaned babies are desperate for medical resources. In the Middle East, where conflict and violence coexist, frightened, displaced children search for safety, security, and peace. In the United States, where everyone has the right to a good education, poor, illiterate children want to learn to read and succeed in life.

All over the world, there are motherless and fatherless children; homeless and abandoned children; children dying of famine, disease, violence, and war. These vulnerable children are God's lambs in need of a shepherd's care. They need committed, compassionate persons to feed them, to gather them, to carry them, and to lead them to a place of safety, security, and peace.

In baptism, we are configured to Christ, the Good Shepherd. Our baptism makes each of us God's instruments of compassion, love, and peace. The Spirit of God empowers us to use the gifts God has given us to work for justice, to help rebuild broken lives, and to offer people hope.

Ponder: Who in my life needs a shepherd's care?

Prayer: Lord, give me a shepherd's heart so that I can show your love and compassion to someone in need.

Practice: Today I will make others aware of the plight of children living in poverty and make a commitment to eradicate global poverty.

Monday of the First Week in Ordinary Time

YEAR I

Hebrews 1:1–6

Psalm 97:1 and 2b, 6 and 7c, 9

YEAR II

1 Samuel 1:1–8

Psalm 116:12–13, 14–17, 18–19

YEARS I AND II

Mark 1:14–20

And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

MARK 1:17–18

Reflection: Jesus called ordinary fishermen to join him in the work of God. Jesus invited these ordinary people to join him in proclaiming the Gospel to others. This same invitation is extended to each of us and to people from various situations and cultures all over the world.

Letting go of their nets, leaving their boats behind, and turning their backs on the things they loved signaled the end of a successful fishing career and the beginning of a radically different calling. Their encounter with Jesus was a life-changing ex-

perience, one that caused them to reexamine every aspect of their lives and ultimately decide to risk everything to follow the call.

It's difficult to hear the voice of God and to respond to the invitation to follow Jesus amid the worldly chatter. Following Jesus in our hyperactive, hyperconnected society is a challenge. We are surrounded daily by many distractions, many forces competing for our attention, our hearts, our souls, and our bodies. We are afraid to let go of the things that make us secure and bring us temporary relief from life's daily struggles.

Finding time in our busy lives to read and meditate on the Word of God opens the way for us to follow and give witness to Jesus in the flow of life. When we read and meditate on the gospels, we encounter the same Jesus who changed the hearts of fishermen and called them to fish for people.

Ponder: What am I clinging to for security?

Prayer: Lord, give me the courage and strength to follow your call so that I may be a witness of love, compassion, and peace to others.

Practice: Today I will take inventory of my material possessions and give what I don't need to the poor.

Tuesday of the First Week in Ordinary Time

YEAR I

Hebrews 2:5–12

Psalm 8:2ab and 5, 6–7, 8–9

YEAR II

1 Samuel 1:9–20

1 Samuel 2:1, 4–5, 6–7, 8abcd

YEARS I AND II

Mark 1:21–28

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, [Jesus] entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 1:21–22

Reflection: Jesus astounds us with the simplicity of his teaching. Love God and our neighbor as ourselves. He teaches us to live with God's law of love as our authority. He shows us how to love by teaching us compassion and forgiveness, faith and hope, patience and acceptance, justice and courage.

We, too, are teachers of one another. Our daily actions, words, and behaviors have the power to influence all those we meet. We teach compassion

by being present to those who are ill or troubled. We teach forgiveness by letting go of hurts and resentments. We teach faith by relying on God to show us what to do. We teach hope by looking for the positive in our lives. We teach patience by practicing self-control and letting go of self-centeredness. We teach acceptance by trusting we are where we are supposed to be and enjoying the moment. We teach justice by speaking out on behalf of those who suffer from others' prejudice, indifference, and lack of integrity. We teach courage by moving forward despite our fears.

Every day we have a new opportunity to accept God as our authority and put our hope and trust in the power of love. Every day we have the choice to let Jesus teach us the way of compassion and forgiveness. Every day we have a chance to astound those we meet by our willingness to teach and give witness to God's love and peace.

Ponder: What am I teaching others?

Prayer: Lord, you are my teacher. Grant me the humility to learn your way of love.

Practice: Today I will teach love by speaking kindly and respectfully to everyone I encounter.