

Carmelite Book Club

Searching for and Maintaining Peace

by Father Jacques Philippe

Week 2 | Part I: Interior Peace, the Road to Saintliness

For meeting schedule tips, please see “Week 1”.

“I have told you these things so that you will have peace in Me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage! I have conquered the world (John 16:33).”

“The more our soul is peaceful and tranquil, the more God is reflected in it, the more His image expresses itself in us, the more His grace acts through us.”

“...spiritual combat consists precisely in this: defending one’s peace of heart against the enemy who attempts to steal it from us.”

“If we seek peace as the world give it, if we expect peace in accordance with the reasoning of the world, or with the motivations that accord with the current mentality that surrounds us (because everything is going well, because we aren’t experiencing any annoyances and our desires are completely satisfied, etc.), then in tis certain that we will never know peace or that our peace will be extremely fragile and of short duration.”

Summary:

To make progress in the spiritual life, we must believe that any good we do in life comes from God’s grace alone, and not from ourselves. We must allow God to work in our lives by cooperating with His grace and this becomes more possible, the more our souls are peaceful and tranquil. We frequently lose peace because we try to act on our own, without God’s grace. Peace must begin in our own hearts because we cannot pass on to others what we do not have ourselves. Acquiring inner peace comes about through fostering continual conversion of heart and prayer. We must be convinced that our entire life is marked by constant spiritual combat, but that Our Lord has already won the victory, and our goal must be to adhere ever more deeply to Him. All the reasons that cause us to lose our peace are bad. The peace offered to us by God is not that of the world. In order to attain interior peace, we must have goodwill, the determination to always do God’s will. However, this does not mean that we will be perfect - only that we strive to love Him and live the life of virtue and allow Him to gradually detach us from everything contrary to His will.

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Reflection Questions

1. What is one particular insight I have gained from this section?
2. Why is it so important for us to acquire and maintain interior peace? What obstacles stand in my way?
3. Am I aware that my life is in a constant state of spiritual battle? How can I fight victoriously in this battle?
4. Why will I never know peace if I seek it as the world gives it? How is the peace of the world different from that offered by God?
5. Do I truly believe God wants me to be a saint, and that I can become one with His help? What does it mean to me to be a saint?