

PACEM IN TERRIS

P E A C E O N E A R T H

COULD YOU BE A MYSTIC?

You probably are! A Christian Mystic is one who desires to enter into the mystery of God—to transcend human understanding. The quest of the Mystic is to eliminate all distractions; to be still and receive God’s love.

We tend to think of mysticism as merely a mystery, something unknowable and unsolvable rather than wonderful and awe-inspiring. Mysticism is about clarity, not confusion.

The true mystic is eager to reveal the mystery of all things and points with awe at everything in creation. The mystic calls us to renew our sense of wonder at everyday things: of every star in the sky, the song of a bird, the beauty of flowers, and every new-born babe. We could almost say these things are hidden—not in darkness but in daylight. Mysticism, says G.K. Chesterton, is only a heightened common sense. All these things are signs and symbols pointing to God. Everything points to God.

Chesterton adds: a mystic is one for whom the supernatural is natural. “Take away the supernatural and what remains is unnatural!”

The surprise is that mysticism has a practical benefit. When our aware-



The Hermitage is a home for the Mystic.

ness of God’s love and of supernatural mysteries increases, we are led more deeply into divine truth. Divine truth leads us to action. We begin to look inward and recognize where we need to look outward and “Love our neighbor as God has loved us.” This entry into the “Holy of Holies” is a journey from the head to the heart, we become present to the Presence of God within.

Why do pilgrims come to Pacem?

They come to “*Be Still*” in the silence and solitude of the hermitage. Their journey into the heart brings them into that stillness. Then, when walking in the prairie, seeing soft green moss on the trails or the prairie flowers, maybe encountering the gentle presence of a deer and often times standing with awe and wonder before the Cross in the prairie, or just rocking in the rocking chair—in that stillness, in the signs and symbols of everyday things, one is bathed in the experience of God’s Presence.

The mystic reveals God’s good order and helps us keep our perspective, which is so easily lost in this world. Mysticism, says G. K. Chesterton, keeps people sane. ♦

*“As the deer longs for streams of water,
so my soul
longs for you,
O God.”*

Psalm 42:2

Just a note . . .

I recently read about two different ways we approach seeking God. The author was quick to point out that when we want to *experience* God - we somehow think we are the ones in control of the experience—which we initiate. However, when we seek to *encounter* God, we acknowledge that He is ever present to us - we have but to recognize Him! God desires us! We only need to be open to the surprising ways He reveals Himself to us in our everyday surroundings.

St. Anselm, an early church Father, used to pray, “Lord, let me seek you in desiring you, desire you in seeking you, find you in loving you, and love you in finding you.”

As we enter this Resurrection Season of Easter, recall the many appearances Jesus had with the disciples and others before he ascended to heaven. Let St. Anselm’s prayer be our prayer. This Easter, watch for your own resurrection appearance from the Lord. Listen for the Risen Lord to say “Peace be with you. My peace I give you.” Have a Blessed Easter!

Julie

St. John of the Cross

Juan de Yepes was born in Spain in 1542. After a number of years as a Carmelite friar (where he took the name John of the Cross), he was persuaded by Saint Teresa of Avila to help her lead a reform movement to restore the Carmelite order to a



simpler and more deeply spiritual standard.

John paid the price of reform: increasing opposition, misunderstanding and petty rivalries, persecution and imprisonment—cruelties inflicted by his brothers in Christ. Alone with his God, he came to know the Cross and experience the dying of Jesus.

Dark Night of the Soul, is based on a poem he wrote while a prisoner, in which he describes a soul, like a lover, slipping out in the night to keep a rendezvous with its Beloved. John’s suffering and spirituality go hand-in-hand; his mystical theology outlines a love affair with God, a relationship marked by periods of desolation as well as joy.

Appreciating You!



Several Pacem Prayer Partners and Volunteers were able to come to the annual Appreciation Day March 13. The Pacem Ministry depends heavily on the prayer power of those who pray for it, and on the servant hearts of those who are able to devote time to the ministry. Thank you all!

Franciscan Lenten Retreat



The Secular Franciscan Fraternity that meets monthly at Pacem in Terris invited the St. Alphonsas Fraternity to join them for a Lenten Day of Reflection.



Teresa Ecker & Joe Leis, fraternity ministers.

In his mystical treatises, he wrote of how times of dryness and seeming abandonment may lead the soul into union with God. John died in 1591, a genius of mystical theology, he has been proclaimed a Doctor of the Church.

The Church celebrates the holy life of St. John of the Cross on December 14th. ♦

His Peace Overcomes Violence

The news media constantly bombards us with the sad condition of our world: from increasing poverty and hunger to rapidly spreading hatred and violence within and between countries. Our world seems to have embarked on a suicidal journey.

People often wonder why there is so much external violence in the world. Much of the violence stems from the anger and frustration in people's hearts. We have become so accustomed to the violence of our dismembered world; we do not realize how far humanity has fallen.

Unfortunately, many people do not know that the peace of Christ is what their hearts truly desire. Jesus said, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you."* (Jn 14:27). It is only Christ and his Spirit who bring the true joy and peace of heart that people are so desperately longing for. It is only in Christ that the violence, frustration and anger of the world will cease.

Our compassionate God is ready to meet this need and has provided a place, Pacem in Terris – where His people can come and be alone with

Him in the silence and solitude of the hermitage. It offers a practical, workable response to Paul's exhortation: *"Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around, but let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do."* (Rom 12:2).



The San Damiano Cross

This time alone with the Lord becomes the place of purification and transformation, the place of the great struggle and the great encounter...It is the place where Christ remodels us in his own image, frees us from the victimizing compulsions of the world, and floods our soul with the peace that passes all understanding. ♦

Hermit Notes



"God is so Good! I thought I was coming here to get over my fear of loneliness, but instead, God saturated me with His loving presence and gave me peace. This is my Poustinia! Alleluia!"



"Pacem has become a vital necessity in my relationship with the Lord and I long for this place and the fellowship it always brings. It amazes me that God longs for us to be intimate with Him. Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to do just that."



"Thank you, for everything! It feels like all this was custom prepared for me. The Pacem ministry is a wonderful reminder of God's great love for me! And, the food is delicious."



"To Pacem: You provide a place for this weary soul to rest and find comfort in Christ. Peace to everyone!"



"My time here with the Lord has been exactly what I needed. God directs and plans each visit just for me. Yet each time I come I'm "blown away" at how his plan unfolds. I tell my friends and family that each time I cross over onto Pacem land, I feel a sense of peace in a mighty way. God Bless this ministry."



"Thank you for providing a sacred ground, here in the woods, where I was able to spend time with God. It was restful and fruitful. I didn't know God could talk so much!"



"The silence of the Pacem woods and this Hermitage has filled my soul with rejoicing! My spirit is re-energized."

Pacem Profile

Diane Martin, a frequent hermit-guest since 2006 brought her husband George along for the fall woodcutting day. They both worked the entire day until the shed was full of split wood for the winter. Staff said they were a “heart-y” team that wouldn’t quit!! They both also came to this year’s Appreciation Day for Volunteers and Prayer Partners (Diane is one of those, too) held in March.



Diane and George have a “new friend” in the wood splitter since the fall woodcutting day!

Dear friends,

I was reminded during our Lenten journey that “Lent” means “Spring” and brings a Spiritual Springtime leading to Easter and the promise of New life.

What a Joy! I had a “mystical moment” remembering the joy of motherhood and bringing forth new life! Pondering this miracle, it is clear that “birthing” is not the source of new life. God is the creator, the source, the one who brings forth and sustains all life! We are privileged participants, marveling at the birth of our children. That truth deepens our appreciation of the birth of animals, the birth of birds emerging from eggs and beautiful butterflies from cocoons—and on and on. Then moments of grace occur when Spring arrives and we watch the miracle of trees and plants and flowers begin to appear—how faithfully “Mother earth” gives “birth” to new life! As with all birthing, it is God who creates the necessary environment for this miracle of new life. To be aware, attuned to this Presence of God – is to be a Mystic!

As a follower of St Francis of Assisi, I am always inspired by his passion, his love for God and all of God’s Creation. St. Francis fell in love with his Creator and love related him to all of creation. He embraced everyone and everything with great reverence and respect as creatures of God. People were his brothers and sisters. Brother sun and sister moon, lady poverty and sister death – he was related to all through God’s love. We can join St. Francis, the Mystic, at Easter and sing his Hymn of Creation!

Let us Celebrate with Easter Joy,

Shirley Wanchena

Cheerful Givers!

We are so grateful! Everyday we witness God ministering to our hermit/guests. We experience that faithfulness as you continue your prayers and financial support for Pacem. Thank you! God ministers, you support, we serve and Pacem works!

One hermit wrote: “I can’t tell you what a blessing it is to spend time alone with the Lord at Pacem! Each time I come God never fails to quiet my jangled spirit, refresh my soul, restore my focus and fill me with peace for the next phase of my journey. Please accept my little tithe that others might also experience the wonders God does here at Pacem.”

There are so many of you that could echo this hermit’s sentiment. Your faithful contributions make you special Partners for Peace helping to provide for the spiritually hungry of all ages and faiths.

How to give? Use the enclosed envelope, or---visit our brand new “DONATE NOW” button on the Charitable Gifts page on the Pacem website- www.paceminterris.org. We need your help for the future.

Thank you for your great generosity and faithfulness. We pray you are experiencing the Kingdom Benefits: “God loves a cheerful giver!” (II Cor 9:7) God’s love and a cheerful heart! Wow! What a return on one’s investment! We can’t ever give too much for we know God’s generosity can never be outdone!

“The Christian
of the future
will be a mystic
or he will not exist
at all.”

Karl Rahner