

# PACEM in TERRIS

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

## Freedom . . . to be still

As hermit guests at Pacem in Terris, you come in all sizes, ages, and faith backgrounds, but you have this in common: you come hungry for God and eager to pray! No question about it, the hermitage is for those prayerfully seeking God. Psalm 42:2 could have been written about you: “As the deer longs for running water, so my soul longs for you, O God.” The hermitage is designed to provide that heavenly meeting place where God quenches your thirst for him. It is a holy sanctuary, a place of warmth and freedom, a place of peace surrounded with the beauty and harmony of nature, a place of being not doing, a place of listening where God is the sole/soul director: loving, healing, consoling, guiding, renewing, restoring, nourishing—a true spiritual home.

One of the rare gifts the Pacem hermitage offers is freedom from noise. Our culture today is constantly bombarding us with noise, not only from radio and TV, but from computers, cell phone ring tones, pagers, faxes, singing e-mails, MP3 players, etc. We live amidst a cacophony of sounds. But something in us cries out to be still, to be quiet, to think, to pray.

It is not surprising that the Psalmist reminds us of how to satisfy our hunger and thirst for God when he writes in Psalm 46:11:



*Free to hear the silence: Quiet places for reflection and prayer await the hermits who come to Pacem in Terris.*

“Be still and know that I am God.”

There is freedom in the hermitage to experience the Lord in undistracted simplicity, to abide with him quietly in face-to-face communion. As one hermit guest wrote, “When I leave that still point of communion with God, I emerge revitalized from such an intimate meeting—it’s like a fresh awakening of the image of God in me. Such a divine encounter clarifies the meaning and purpose of my life, restores my dignity, and influences my every thought, word, and deed as I leave the hermitage and enter back into daily life.” ♦

### Thoughts on Silence

“Silence is the mystery of the world to come. Speech is the organ of this present world. Many are avidly seeking but they alone find who remain in continued silence. . . If you love truth, be a lover of silence.

Silence like sunlight will illuminate you in God and deliver you from the phantom of ignorance. Silence will unite you to God himself. More than all things love silence; it brings you a fruit that tongue cannot describe.

In the beginning we have to force ourselves to be silent. But then from our very silence is born something that draws us in deeper to silence.

May God give you an experience of this something that is born in silence.”

—Thomas Merton, quoting Isaac of Nineveh

“Be still  
and know  
that  
I am God.”

Psalm 46:11

## Just a note . . .

In the Gospels, Jesus assures us that “the truth will set us free” (John 8:32) and that he is “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). As human beings we are created for truth. Whether conscious of it or not, something deep inside us resonates when we are in the presence of truth. The natural setting of Pacem in Terris provides countless encounters with truth. In orienting guests to their retreat, I like to point out that the deer are being deer, the foxes are being foxes, the trees and plants are being the way they were created to exist. All creatures share a common origin in the heart of God the Father, inspiring saints like Francis of Assisi to perceive and name each thing as a “brother” or “sister.” Paying attention to creation helps us live close to the truth. May we each know the wonderful freedom of being more truly who we are, who God created us to be, as we stay close to the truth.

*Ann Marie Croteau*

## On Rust and Prayer

A meditation by hermit Tom Klein.

However you drive to Pacem in Terris, there is always some form of transition from the freeway to the country road, and from Highway 47 to the dirt road that leads you to the retreat center. Along the way, there are many reminders that you are leaving the world behind and coming to be alone with God.

On my most recent trip to the retreat center, as I turned in the drive I thought to myself, *How appropriate that there is a junk yard across the road from the entrance to Pacem in Terris.* It reminds me that much in life is rusting and no longer functional. However, for the time I am staying in the hermitage, the present condition of this life

doesn't matter. I am communing with the true and living God. This investment will not decay, rust, or become dysfunctional. This time alone with God will restore and refresh me; it will help me function as I was created to: in fellowship and communion with God the Creator.

Matthew recorded Jesus's words about laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6: 19-23). The Greek word for “rust” refers not only to metal corrosion but to rot. Everything worldly is going to decay. But time spent alone with God has eternal value. Our time with God will serve us long after the cars we drive to get to Pacem in Terris have joined the junk pile. ◆

## Around Pacem . . .



*A wild turkey enjoys the freedom and peace of the prairie.*



*Butterflies flit about free all summer long at Pacem.*

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

*Matthew 6:19-23, NIV*

# All the Angels Among Us

We have an additional prayer partner we may not have recognized, assigned to each of us by God—our guardian angel.

When we recognize the role the angels played in Jesus's life (Mk. 1:13, Lk. 22:43, Matt. 26:53), we recognize that just as Jesus had access to the angels, so do we as Christians in whom Jesus now lives. The first Christians obviously believed this. The angels played a significant role in their lives, as we see in Acts 5:18, 8:26, 10:3, 12:6-11, 27:22-24.

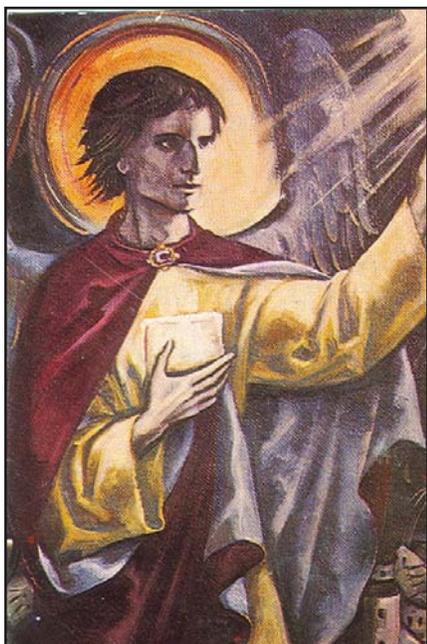
God gave to angels the role of messengers and announcers, to bring us words of truth and reveal God's plan to us. Angels announced to Zechariah the coming of John the Baptist (Lk. 1:19), to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus (Lk. 1:31), to Joseph that he should take Mary as his wife (Matt. 1:20), to the shepherds in Bethlehem the good news of the Messiah's birth (Lk. 2:11), to Joseph that he should flee into Egypt (Matt. 2:13), to the disciples that Christ had risen

from the dead (Matt. 28: 1-6). They appeared to the apostles at Jesus's ascension to heaven (Acts 1:9-10), and they will announce Jesus's return at the end times (Matt. 13:40-43, 16:27, 25:31).

With more than 300 references to angels in Scripture, there is much to learn about the nine choirs of angels, including the many ways they are available to help and pray with us, carrying our prayers and requests to God.

They are always present in our lives to protect us and especially so at the hour of death. In the funeral liturgy, we pray, "May the angels lead you into paradise. . . ." We can take great comfort that such heavenly companions are sure to help "light, guard, rule, and guide us" to our heavenly home. ♦

*From a talk given by Fr. Tim Nolan at the Prayer Partner/Volunteer Gathering, March 24, 2007.*



*“God  
commands  
the angels  
to guard you  
in all your  
ways.”*

*Psalm 91:11*

from our hermits' hearts

♥“I attended an evening dance tonight—I sat in the center of the vast prairie while the trees, the clouds, the wild flowers, and the deer danced. It truly was the best dance I've ever attended! Thank you, Lord, for inviting me to your dance!”

♥“A sincere thank-you from a well-rested and spiritually refreshed priest. It had been so long since I had entered into such pure silence as I enjoyed in the hermitage that the sheer weight of the first 10 months of my priesthood hit me like a ton of bricks. The relief I felt in letting the Lord place his lighter, easier yoke upon me was a profound encounter with his love and mercy. Thank you for making that possible.”

♥“My teenage boys asked me, ‘Mom, how can you be excited to go to a place like that?’ I said, ‘You know how excited I get when I go on vacation with Dad? I get to talk to him all day long, he listens to me, has fun with me—I don't have to share him with anyone else, he's all mine! That's what this is like, a vacation with God!’ ”

♥“I am so appreciative of the opportunity to come here and spend a week in solitude. I am grateful, too, that you accept me—a Buddhist priest—to come for a week with only two days' notice. Although I am a Buddhist, I do believe in God, and I certainly can feel God's presence and love here—in the work you do, in the details of the buildings, and in the woods and paths. God's love is like deep, clear refreshing water or the gift of breath. Peace.”

## Pacem Profile

Fr. Paul Schaaf is an annual visitor to Pacem in Terris. A Precious Blood priest, he offers daily Mass for the staff and guests while he is here. As you can see, he's also quite handy in the kitchen as he shares some of his favorite recipes. He even helps with the dishes, too! He is a good friend, advisor, and blessing to all of us. ♦



*Our priest friend Fr. Paul Schaaf prepares one of his specialties for us!*

## Dear friends,

Some years ago, on the recommendation of several people, I invited a former gang member named John to speak to our high school religion class. He had been involved recklessly in drugs and alcohol, even though he was diabetic, and the health consequences had been devastating. At age 24, he sat before the students in a wheelchair, blind, with a seeing-eye dog beside him, as he shared the moving story of his conversion to Christ.

A few months later, I was told he was in the hospital facing the possible amputation of his legs. When I went to visit, I announced my presence and asked if he knew how many beautiful cards and flowers were in his room. He said, "Yes, I have a picture in my head and I smell every flower." Then he said, "Shirley, I want to tell you what a gift my blindness has been to me." Stunned, I listened carefully as he went on. "I do not know how old you are, what color you are, how tall or short, fat or thin, if you are pretty or otherwise. I have been set free from all the prejudices and judgments I used to measure everyone by. I am free to meet you in the spirit, and I do—I experience your love, compassion, and most of all your faith. I believe I know you better than if I could "see" you. I am truly free!"

Glory to God! Lord set us free,

*Shirley Wanchena*

## A Cycle of Love

You "givers" are amazing! What generous hearts you have, making it possible for us to be here for your sons, daughters, siblings, friends, spouses—all those called and in need of Pacem. Many guests are only able to meet the minimum donation (\$55), and they need our subsidy (our scholarship fund) to make up the difference, to cover the actual cost of \$90.

As you can imagine, this need is ongoing; please consider being our "financial partners" whenever you can! Remember, God knows and returns a hundred fold! On behalf of all the hermits who benefit—and one day it may be someone you love—we say thank you, thank you! Receive our love and our prayers. Glory to God!

It's that cycle of love we keep talking about—God invites, we respond, God provides, hermits are blessed, givers are ministered to. In this cycle of love, everyone wins! And please don't forget to remember us in your will as a legacy for your children's children!

The legal title is:

**Pacem in Terris**  
**26399 Highway 47 NW**  
**Isanti, MN 55040**

*"And you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

John 8:32