

PACEM in TERRIS

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

Thin Places

We are all travelers on a journey from birth through life to death and beyond. People of faith view this journey as a pilgrimage—a quest for ever deeper encounters with God.

Pilgrims are people who live the gospel and encounter Christ in those they meet along the way. Pilgrims seek out what the ancient Celts called “thin places.” In a thin place, the boundary between the sacred and the ordinary is so permeable that the divine breaks through into consciousness and everything becomes infused with the presence of God.

On one level, a thin place is where pilgrims intentionally go to pray. It requires a journey to a holy site, where over the years the boundary between the natural and the supernatural has been chipped away by the prayers and tears, the laughter and celebrations, the hopes and holy aspirations of countless people of faith.

Some people travel to Jerusalem, the place where Jesus taught, died, and was resurrected. They walk the Via Dolorosa, the “Way of Sorrow”—a place made thin by those who have walked it in faith.

Some walk the Camino de Santiago, the “Way of St. James”—the name for several medieval pilgrimage routes leading to the tomb of the apostle James in northern Spain. Others might enter into the sacred quiet of a neighborhood sanctuary during the lunch hour, or walk to a favorite place of prayer in a park, woods, or meadow.



Whether across an ocean or around the block, these intentional journeys are pilgrimages to places made thin by prayer, where people experience God’s peace and presence. Pacem in Terris

is such a thin place, where you can encounter the presence of God in the silence and solitude of a prayer-filled hermitage.

On another level, pilgrims can suddenly come upon a thin place, anywhere and at any time. While hiking in the mountains, they sense the reality of God as the boundary between the natural world and the eternal becomes transparent. Walking along a crowded city street, they feel the embrace of God’s divine love. Encountering a poor, sick, or homeless person, they see the face of Christ.

Such thin-place encounters with God are not meant to be an end in themselves. They are a means to living the gospel with an ever-deepening awareness of God’s presence in all of the places where you live and work and play, and in all of the people you meet along the way. ♦

—A hermit’s reflection

“Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”

L u k e 5 : 1 6 , N I V

For Peace and the Poor

The Pope's chosen name reveals his concern for the world and his hope for the Church.

From the outset of his election, Pope Francis has manifested a simple lifestyle and a deep concern for the poor of the world. In an address to journalists he explained why he chose the name of the beloved saint of Assisi.

During the conclave, he was seated next to his good friend, Brazilian Cardinal Claudio Hummes. When it became clear that the cardinals had elected



him Pope, he said that Cardinal Hummes “gave me a hug and a kiss, and said: ‘Don’t forget the poor!’ . . . Right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of

Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars . . . Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation. He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man . . . How I would love a Church that is poor and for the poor!”

Pacem in Terris is a Franciscan Center for Spirituality, and we are excited about the gifts Pope Francis will bring to the Church. We pray for openness to how he invites us to walk more closely with God, and we believe he will lead us in ways we cannot imagine. ♦

Snow Day

When was the last time you built a snowman, made a snow angel, or had a snowball fight? For most of us it has probably been a long time!

After a big snowstorm, we saw one of our Pacem hermits building this snowman behind the Our Lady of Pacem community house. We watched delightedly from an upstairs window, feeling blessed to observe the childlike spirit that moved him. We were reluctant to interrupt his play to ask for a picture, but our desire to share the moment finally won out. As we talked together for a bit, we wondered if perhaps we would all be a little happier in the midst of our busy and often exhausting lives if we spent more time playing.

As adults, we need to remember that being *childlike* is not the same as being *childish*. It is a way of being simple, joyful, and full of wonder—as children usually are. After all, as Jesus

“Lord, give me the heart of a child, and the awesome courage to live it out as an adult.”

—Catherine Doherty

taught us, “Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 18:3). How much our Lord loved little children!

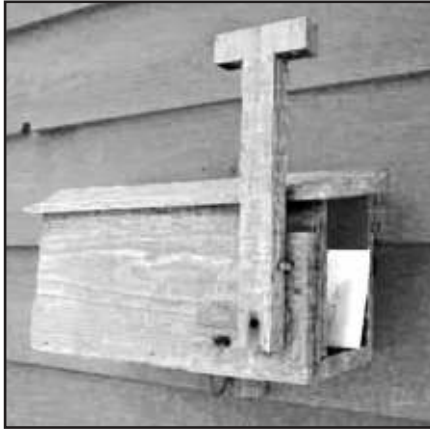
We are grateful to our hermit friend for teaching us an important lesson. Let us have the heart of a child, and may God give us courage to live it out in our lives, for His greater glory. ♦



Our Pacem snowperson has a big smile—and a big heart

Special Delivery

Prayer is like placing a note in God's mailbox — and He always picks up our message.



Take note: God receives your prayers!

It was 1 p.m.—time for the hermits' mail to be picked up.

As I put the list of all my food and prayer requests in the mailbox outside the door of my hermitage, I was confident that my needs would be met; the Pacem staff would pick up my note and deliver what I'd asked for. I raised the flag on the side of the mailbox to signal that there was a note inside,

and then I walked away feeling grateful and well cared for.

During my hermitage time, though, prayer had been a struggle. I found myself thinking that I didn't know how to pray or believe that God had heard me. Then God gently revealed that if I could feel grateful for being cared for by Pacem—if I could request my needs for the day, be confident they would be met, and wait patiently for them to be delivered—then how much more I could trust Him with my prayers.

My God is a mighty God, far more generous, caring, and aware of my every need than anyone—so why do I struggle?

"Be simple," my soul says.

"Trust, for God loves you!"

My prayer is my "note" in God's mailbox. He meets my needs every day—and I am very grateful and well cared for!

—A hermit

Hermit Notes

♥ I want my visits to Pacem to be proactive instead of like a trip to the emergency room. I get so wrapped up with the duties of life that I allow my heart to get hardened. The Lord brought me to Ez. 11:19: "I will take away their stony, stubborn heart, and replace it with a tender responsive one." I feel refreshed and encouraged in the Lord.

♥ What a lovely, spirit-filled space you have created and maintain. I felt the peace of this place from the moment I was oriented to Pacem.

♥ And the cabin—I'd call it four-star simplicity. Every single detail contributed to making this weekend one of refreshment and communion with my Lord.

♥ I was surprised by what God had for me here. He just wanted me to bask for a while in His love. I came here to mark my 50th birthday. Can you imagine a greater gift than the Lord wanting me to relax in his loving gaze?

♥ This place allows a hermit to relax and focus on the Lord. It is all perfection. A verse that characterized the weekend was Psalm 27:8: "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek."

♥ I am struck how this time of rest and renewal energizes my prayer and gives me greater zeal to return to the world and serve my family and my congregation.

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road."

Little Money and Great Faith

Helen Stordahl met Shirley Wanchena in 1985, shortly after Helen began working for architect Keith Waters, who helped design Pacem's hermitages and main house. "One day a woman and her son came into the office," recalls Helen. "She had a basket of muffins over her arm, and she asked to speak with Keith. After their meeting, I asked him, 'Who was

"Jesus did not come to explain away suffering or to remove it. He came to fill it with his presence."

— Paul Claudel

that?" He replied, 'That is a woman of little money and great faith.' "

Several years later, Helen went on a hermitage retreat at Pacem and soon became a regular volunteer. She began and is still in charge of the Pacem Prayer Partners. More than 600 people have committed to pray every day for the hermits and the needs of Pacem in Terris. Here's what Helen has to say about partnering with Pacem:

"Out of her deep love for God, this "woman of little money and great faith" brought Pacem in Terris into being. Do not, however, attribute this work to Shirley herself. She will correct you immediately! It was and is God's work. Shirley will tell you how unqualified she was to have undertaken such a project: 'I had no money and no degree.' She may not have realized it at the time, but poverty

and humility are precisely the qualifications that God looks for in men and women who seek to do His will. The greatest works have always been done by such as these. Won't you stretch your faith and partner with Shirley to pray for and support Pacem?" ♦

To become a Prayer Partner or to contribute to Pacem's ministry, call 763-444-6408, write to the address below, or visit www.paceminterris.org.



Dear friends,

This past year has been a difficult one for many of us, as well as for Pacem in Terris. My son Jeffrey, who helped found Pacem and was director from 1998 to 2005, died in August, just weeks after a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. Thank you again for the many expressions of sympathy and acts of kindness we received through your prayers, cards, phone calls, and memorials given in his memory. Please continue to pray for us as we all grieve his loss. His wife, Ann, resigned her position as director of Pacem in the fall, and we are in a time of transition and reorganization as we deal with staff changes and seek God's wisdom and guidance for the future.

During such times of sorrow and change, it is a great consolation to know that our loving God remains the same—always faithful, ever present in our lives. As we journey through the mystery of this 25th anniversary year, we know that God is continuing His mission for Pacem—to welcome all people who want to come and be alone with Him. We marvel that in our weakness, He still can use us to love and serve the people He invites to Pacem. It's an ongoing joy to hear our hermits' stories of God's amazing love. That's what blesses us and brings us encouragement as we continue to be grateful for these 25 years and look forward to all He has for us in the future.

Peace and prayers,

Shirley Wanchena