



A SISTER'S PERSPECTIVE

“A Sister’s Perspective” is intended to be a new column featured in *Community News* that draws on the wisdom of our sisters in order to offer advice and thoughts on a variety of broad topics. These topics include such things as peace, dealing with change, education, leadership, and more. We are grateful for the sisters’ willingness to share their wisdom with us. If you are interested in sharing your wisdom, please contact the communications office. For this article, Sr. Kate O’Donnell was interviewed on the topic of peace.

Peace. Such a simple word that holds such profound meaning. How can one ever truly define peace or what it means to live as a peaceful person?

Sr. Kate O’Donnell recognizes that peace can be defined by different people in very different ways. For her personally, peace is something that comes from deep within regardless of what may be happening around her.

This inner peace, she stresses, does not preclude her from getting angry or make her a “paragon of virtue” but through prayer and inspiration from other people, she can “always reach into [her] gut” where she believes peaceful thoughts and feelings reside.

Maintaining this inner peace is no easy task, particularly in our world today—a world in which Kate finds peace to be quite fragile. Walking the path of a peaceful person often requires intentional effort and can include missteps. Being human, she knows that she still sometimes makes judgments or fails to walk in another’s shoes and, in doing so, can “easily stray from a peaceful stance.”

Kate believes that a peaceful life is one that is “based totally in prayer.” This does not mean one must be on constantly bended knees with ever-folded hands. A peaceful, prayerful life, Kate says, can be as simple as taking a moment to pause and breathe in a tense situation before reacting.

While working in a hospital for a number of years, Kate noticed that several of the workers wore a bracelet that said WWJD. During her time with them, the workers taught her the meaning of that bracelet and shared with her the way their interactions with others “often gave them the opportunity to pause and to ask themselves, ‘What would Jesus do?’”

Though she does not wear the bracelet, Kate finds that when she pauses in tense situations, she often asks Jesus, “What would you do?” and is frequently amazed to find that this allows her “to have a sense of peace restored.”

In addition to these methods, Kate says that one of the best ways she’s been able to support her growth in inner peace has been with the help of a person she calls a “spiritual

director.” “Anyone can have a spiritual director,” she says, explaining that this person can be anyone who is able to encourage, support, and challenge one to be his or her best self. How does one find this person? One just knows, she says.

For her, a spiritual director is a person who “witnesses to me what it means to live in peace” and is “anyone that I feel like I can talk to about the fact that sometimes I struggle to find peace in myself.”

Kate draws also upon the wisdom and strength of people such as best-selling author and Benedictine sister, Joan Chittister. Joan challenges Kate through her writing to speak only to issues themselves rather than to go after people. This is something Kate believes she struggles with, stating that “Working in the area of justice, I struggle sometimes to remember that I can be a just person only if I’m a peace-filled person.”

What does peace mean to you?

*Meghan Glass
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