

peace

begins with us

12 Ways Families
Can Promote Peace

Locally
Globally
Eternally

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Finding Your Own Peaceful Heart

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

St. Augustine of Hippo

how wired for fighting and war. But the truth is that we are made for peace because we are made by God, who makes all things good. “You formed my inmost being,” the psalmist sings to God. “I am wonderfully made.” What’s more, we have an added bonus—the peace given to us by Jesus himself:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid (John 14:27).

St. Paul also tells us that the peace of God “surpasses all understanding,” which tells us that just because we can’t comprehend God’s peace within us, doesn’t mean we can deny it. But we do misplace it sometimes. Like the

You and I are meant to spread peace. It is one of our deepest and most natural callings. Peace is part of what makes us human. This surprises some people, especially when the violence and brutality in our world get us thinking that humans are some-

glasses we search for that are right there on our noses or the homework assignments left behind on kitchen tables everywhere, peace is never far away. In our searching for this peace within us, we often mistake other things for peace. We think Jesus' peace needs to stay over there in the corner—the one where we go to church or say our prayers. We don't want to look over there because we can't take our eyes off what's directly in front of us—things like putting food on the table, making sure our kids get into the right college and getting our work done. We tell ourselves that Jesus' peace isn't going to help with that. Not really, anyway.

But Jesus is our real world. And finding the peace inside us isn't a matter of shifting our attention away from our work, our problems and day-to-day living. Jesus doesn't want that for us. He wants us to light our lamps and set them on our lamp stands so his wisdom and love can give light to our whole house. He wants to help us find the peace he has given us so we can meet every challenge with love, courage and, yes, even joy.

Okay, but how do we find this inner peace? That's what this little book is all about. Through twelve stepping-stones, we'll start a journey to help us discover our peace. And because peace is a two-way street, we'll do a little "roadwork." We'll find ways to spread peace in our families, communities, workplaces, schools and the greater world. We'll see how this multiplies our own peace in our lives today and in the perfect life ahead that's promised to us. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Let's start the journey now.

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Stepping-stone 1

When Jesus offers a ride, get in.

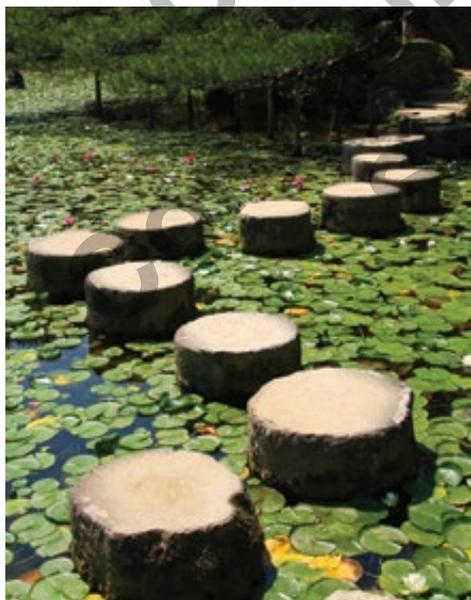
Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

this game was the best thing he could have done for her.

We've all missed important things in our lives. Sometimes it's okay. Really. Remember the disciples on the way to Emmaus who didn't recognize the res-

urrected Jesus? They got the benefit of a beautiful journey alone with Jesus—just the two of them. Maybe if they'd recognized Jesus immediately, he might have said, "Okay great, I'm moving on to someone else who needs me." But no. Jesus put these two people, former friends who now thought he was a complete stranger, at the top of his priority list. Jesus gave them insights into their beloved Scriptures that made their hearts burn within them.



What an extraordinary gift—all because they missed something.

Even when we keep our eyes shut tight, the light of peace within us flickers and rises at Jesus' call. Think of all the people who didn't get the message right away. Thomas wouldn't believe Jesus had risen until he touched his wounds. Paul dragged Jesus' followers around in chains before his conversion. Francis of Assisi got his wires crossed when he heard a voice saying, "Rebuild my church," and literally repaired the church where he was praying.

None of us is too busy, too old, too young or too anything to accept Jesus' call to peace. The wrong turns and detours we take are part of a journey. So for now, just accept that Jesus is calling you to find and share the peace that's within you and your children. (Yes, there really is peace within them too.) Don't worry about what you're going to do or how you will do it. Let Jesus take care of that. For now, just accept the ride.

Roadwork

Peacemakers or Peace Breakers?

Many families create mission statements to express their values and priorities. Why not take this a step further and create a family peace statement? You might call it "Our Peace Promises." It can express your family's commitment to peace both in your home and in the world. You might include statements like: We are kind to others. We forgive others. We do not blame other people. We stay away from violence in videos and movies, etc. Write out or print your peace promises, and display them prominently in your home. If you have kids who aren't yet old enough to read or write, have them draw what these promises mean to them.

Prayer

God, we are your own children. Help us find your peace within us and in all of our brothers and sisters. Holy Spirit, give us wisdom to recognize true peace and share it in your name. Jesus, let your peace settle within us, giving us the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. Amen.

Stepping-stone 2

Get more enjoyment out of your trip. Bring a map.

Prayer is not asking.
Prayer is putting
oneself in the
hands of God, at
his disposition, and
listening to his voice
in the depth of our
hearts.

Blessed Mother Teresa

What comes to mind when you think of peace? A lush green valley? A tranquil blue ocean? Your children getting along for five minutes?

Picturing a peaceful image can be a healthy response to a stressful situation. But in reality, those images are outside of our control. At another time of year that peaceful valley could be blanketed by a blizzard, and that azure blue sea could be whipped into a destructive hurricane frenzy. And your kids? Well, you know how long that peace lasts.

So how about this? Instead of picturing an ocean, how about visualizing the One who calmed the storm at sea? Instead of picturing a beautiful valley, how about contemplating yourself walking through that valley with the One who is always at your side, no matter how dark or terrifying it gets? And why not spend some time asking the One who created your kids what he wants for them?

“Though the grass withers and the flower wilts,
the word of our God stands forever,”
the prophet Isaiah says (40:8).
So it just makes sense to
keep our minds and
hearts focused



on what lasts, not on fleeting solutions. How do we do this? The answer is prayer.

The difference between a life of peace and a life of anxiety is prayer. Think about it. When we don't know where we're going, we use a map or GPS. So why don't we spend more time consulting the map that directs our whole lives?

If you've been away from prayer, all you need is a simple one to get started. Visualizing a scene from the life of Jesus, and putting yourself there with him, is a great way for young children to pray, especially when they're in stressful situations. You can help children learn to pray this way by sharing stories about Jesus. Use a children's Bible if you have one, or simply sit together quietly and talk about it.

Roadwork

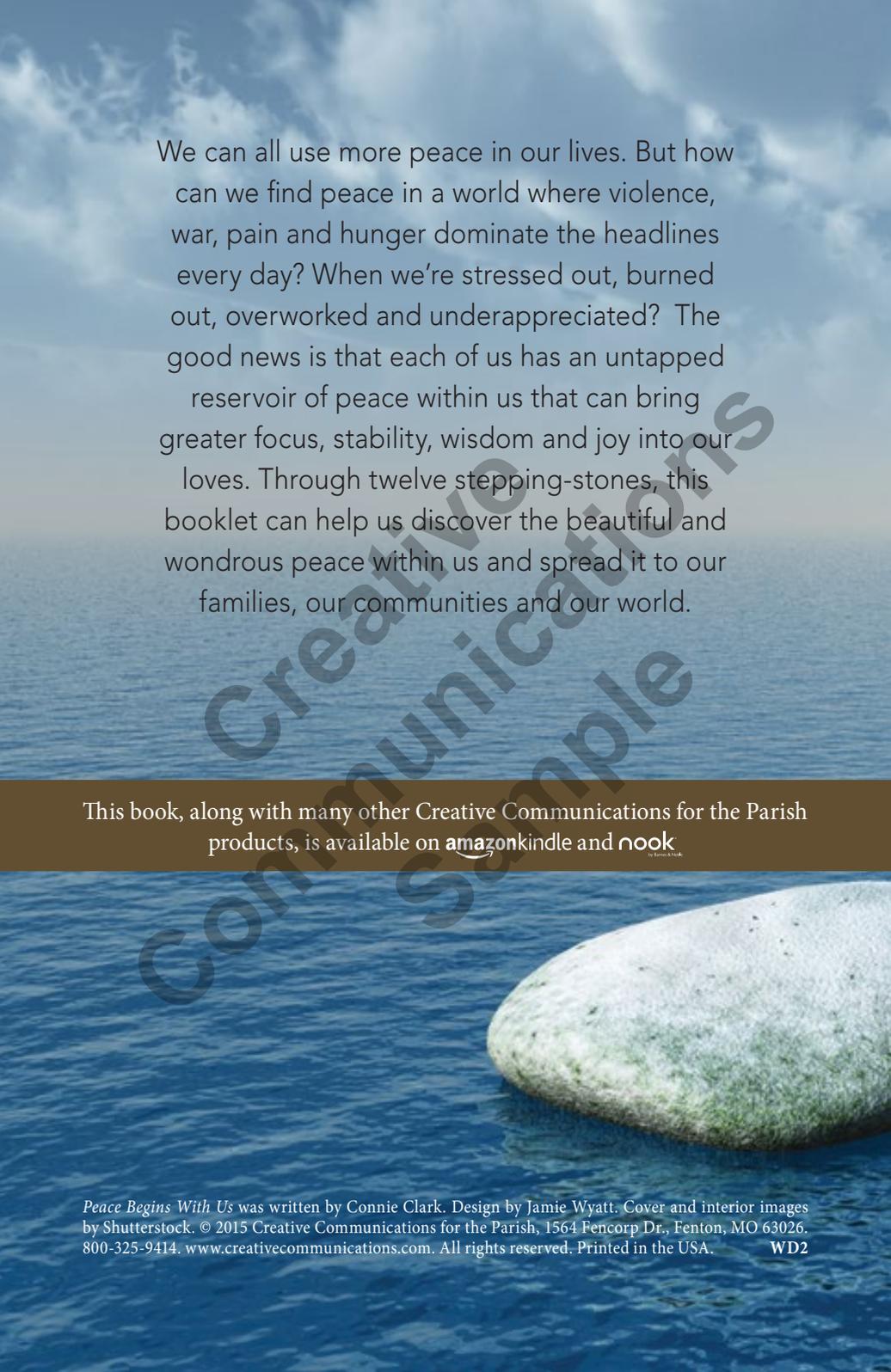
The Greatest Peace Prayer

At Mass, we receive Jesus—body, blood, soul and divinity. He strengthens the peace within us in ways we can never accomplish on our own. Here are some tips for helping your family get more out of the Mass:

- Don't hide in the back pews—sit up front so your kids can see what's going on. (You'd get bored too if all you could see were the back of people's heads for an hour!)
- Bring your kids to church on a day other than Sunday. Walk around and show them everything up close.
- As you sing or speak the Mass prayers, imagine that you aren't just joining the people in church. You are joining God's people everywhere—all around the world and in heaven too.

Prayer

Jesus, when we can't find our peace, help us to see your loving face. That's all we need. Amen.



We can all use more peace in our lives. But how can we find peace in a world where violence, war, pain and hunger dominate the headlines every day? When we're stressed out, burned out, overworked and underappreciated? The good news is that each of us has an untapped reservoir of peace within us that can bring greater focus, stability, wisdom and joy into our lives. Through twelve stepping-stones, this booklet can help us discover the beautiful and wondrous peace within us and spread it to our families, our communities and our world.

This book, along with many other Creative Communications for the Parish products, is available on [amazon](#) kindle and [nook](#)