

## Catholic Mindfulness

I picked up a greeting card recently with a very bold “PEACE” on the front, followed by the statement, “It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.”

I believe this statement is very much in keeping with the Judeo-Christian notion of Shalom. Shalom, that inner sense of peace, comes to mind as I have been reading a book called, “*The Mindful Catholic, Finding God one moment at a time*” written by Dr. Gregory Bottaro. This book is the selected book for *Healing Mindfully*, our support group for those who struggle with depression and anxiety (*Healing Mindfully meets* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of the month at 7:15pm in the waiting room of the Merciful HELP Center. All are welcome at any session!)

*The Mindful Catholic* is focused on anxiety. I have been reading it in a small group as it includes exercises and discussion points that anyone can learn from. Bottaro, a former novice for the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, is now a clinical psychologist. While some associate mindfulness with the practices of Buddhism, Bottaro states emphatically that Catholics have been practicing mindfulness for 2,000 years in the practice of contemplation. The rosary is a form of prayer and meditation combined, and has been around for over 1200 years.

Mindfulness in a Catholic sense is when we have the inner conviction that we are safe in the present moment because we have a God who loves and cares for us. Jesus spoke of that sense of confidence in Matthew’s gospel. “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, or what you will wear. Look at the birds of the air: They do not sow or reap or gather into barns—and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

In an interview, Bottaro wrote that, “Catholic mindfulness is a way to practically trust God more in our lives. Instead of separating faith from the day-to-day of life, mindfulness helps bridge the gap so that we can feel a peace in our lives that should come from having a Father we can trust.”

We live in the context of a 24-hour cable news loop where there is a constant search for the next salacious headline, crisis, or scandal. It does not help that our beloved faith is included in the headlines in recent weeks. Our faith challenges us to have the sense of peace and confidence in God so that we can be present to Him and the people he puts in front of us without being so divided between them, our email, text messages, social media, and our news feeds.

In the scriptures, Jesus said that we should not let our hearts be troubled and that we should have faith in Him. This conviction led St. Teresa of Avila to write, “*Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away: God never changes.*”

*Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices. We would do well to take her advice!*

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