

Finding Joy, Even After a Loss PAGE 35

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GUIDE

Persevering for *Peace*

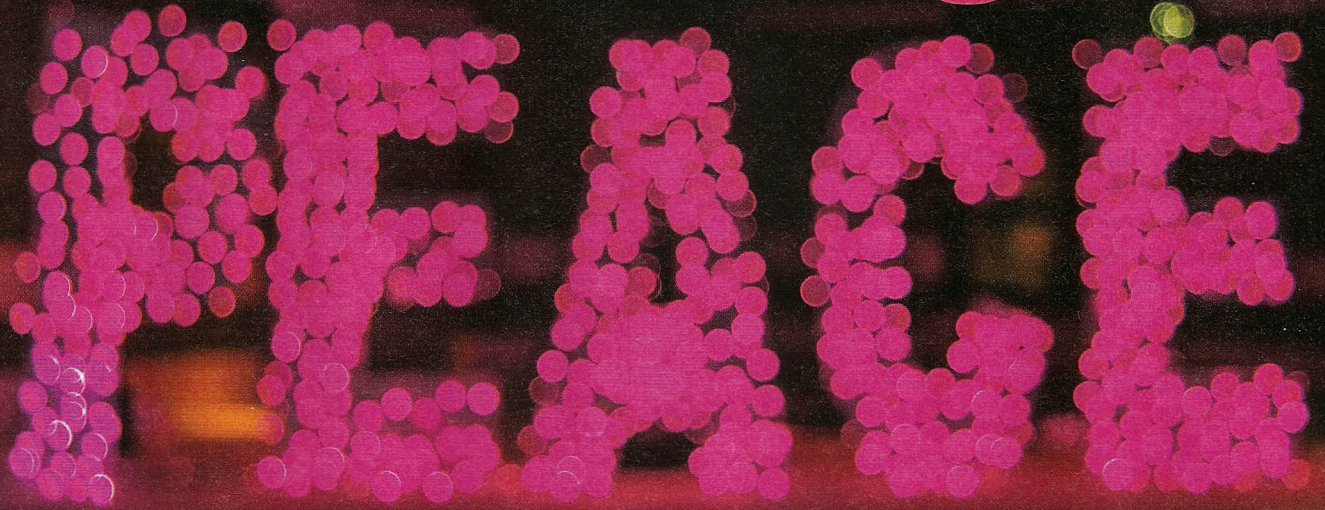
OLD MONEY
*Of Shekels and
Drachmas*

**Henriette
Delille**
.....
Serving the
Poorest
of the Poor



STORIES FROM THE FIELD OF LIFE

Persevering for



Carole St. Laurent

In this final installment in Carole's 2018 series on peace in Liguorian, she brings to light three personal stories that demonstrate peace.

On our journey deeper into peace this year, we've made several stops. We began with an exploration of interfaith peace and ways the Bible embraces the whole world, including people of varying faiths. We ventured into the valley of the shadows of death and terrorism, and saw how the light of God shines even there. We considered how theology and practice can empower us to respond peacefully to violence wherever it occurs. Here, we conclude this peace journey together through my favorite medium, personal stories of peace.

My gravitational pull toward peace has taken me far and wide. Over the last ten years I have been to more than twenty countries in pursuit of a fuller understanding and more intimate experience of the realities that surround peace. I've come to believe that there's nothing more powerful than personal stories to build the empathy that I strongly believe nurtures peace.



IN THE FAMILY, WHERE IT'S THE TOUGHEST

"Lighting the Way to Interfaith Peace," our first article in this series (January), referred to the next congress of the Parliament of the World's Religions, in my hometown of Toronto, in November. I'm excited to have the opportunity to participate directly by serving on a storytelling panel for peace and hosting a workshop to explore how dance can nurture peace. With more than 10,000 participants expected from more than seventy countries and nearly every faith tradition, it's anticipated to be one of the most dramatic demonstrations of global interfaith peace. And while I fully expect to encounter some extraordinary individuals with stories that will remain in my heart long after the event is over, the most dramatic personal demonstration of interfaith peace that I have seen to date is with my close friend, Karin, and the way she welcomed her adopted daughter, Theodora.

Karin is a devout Christian who dearly wanted a child. Single and unlikely to have her own child, she decided to adopt one. As biological parents can't choose the children they give birth to, Karin didn't want to choose the child

she would adopt. Instead, she told the adoption agents to use their best judgment to match her with a child in need. That child was a teenage Muslim girl. Karin welcomed her with open arms. Karin began learning more about Islam, offered to attend services at the mosque with Theodora, and reassured her that she would—unconditionally—accept her religious dietary and dress-code preferences. When Karin began to participate in Muslim traditions more enthusiastically than Theodora herself, her daughter reassured her that she could take a more casual approach to Islam. What deep and authentic acceptance Karin exhibited, especially in an area where it's often most difficult to practice—in the family.

I confess I have not always practiced such unconditional acceptance of others' beliefs in my own family. When I became a Christian, I was so enthusiastic about it and so concerned about my family's salvation that I aggressively pressured them to believe in God and the Bible. All this did was drive them further away. It was a painful lesson to learn to pray for them silently, love them actively, and focus on enjoying the abundant life Jesus promised, balancing my desire to share my faith with their right not to hear or adopt it. Religious conflict gave way to mutual acceptance. I realized my father was just as concerned about my religious fervor as I was about his atheism. Family life became more peaceful, and some of my prayers were

answered—my mother and sisters became Christians, while my father and I agreed to disagree.

IN THE FACE OF MASSIVE THREATS

The next story is about persevering in peace building, even in the face of opposition. In "Our Role in God's Peace Plan," the second in the series (April), we learned that the Christian call in the war on terror is to "return evil [with] a blessing, because to this [we] were called so that [we] may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9). This is the kind of radical, supernatural but God-enabled love that my friend, Jean Paul Samputu, demonstrated to Vincent, the man who killed his father during the Rwandan genocide. I saw Jean Paul after his recent return to Canada. Although he has been blessed with opportunities to share his testimony for peace and forgiveness all over the world, it was not easily received in Rwanda. In fact, some people were so angry about his message of forgiveness that they planned to kill him. Although warned about the danger to his life, Jean Paul could not contradict the commandment he feels God gave to him personally, as well as to the world at large: to love and forgive our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). On the contrary, Jean Paul proclaimed it boldly, trusting God with his life. Eventually, opposition led him to move to Europe and finally back to his adopted

Part 4 OF A FOUR-PART SERIES



We cannot violate peace in the pursuit of peace.

country, Canada. He is now reuniting with his children after eight long years apart. Following God's will is no guarantee we will not face opposition, have to make sacrifices, or even face death threats in this life. But we know we have believed God, and we're confident that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to us until that day (1 Timothy 1:12).

AFTER A SENSELESS ACT

Just days after I wrote "Living in God's State of Peace: Active Nonviolence," the third article in this series, (July-August), an act of violence shook Toronto. A man plowed his van into pedestrians on one of our busiest streets, killing ten people and injuring fifteen others. The day after the tragedy, drawn to the epicenter, I witnessed peace in action—strangers were united in grief, light-

To read more about ways people have responded to this and other acts of violence with peace, visit my website, crypeace.org/finding-peace-after-tragedy.

ing candles, writing messages, and Muslims and Christians were holding a joint news conference announcing a new

community organization: We Love Willowdale. Its mission is to counter the hate and fear that resulted from—and many believe prompted—the attack with love and kindness. We Love Willowdale hosted numerous events, prayer services, and vigils to honor the victims and restore a sense of community to the neighborhood. Their

impact made a strong impression on the city, including a beautiful memorial service attended by politicians, first responders, and hundreds of citizens. We were all united in our determination to overcome hate with love. Peace won. Peacefully.

BY WALKING WITH JESUS

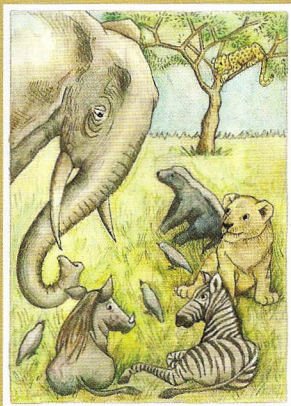
Friends, although it's very difficult to walk the path of peace when faced with violence, terror, war, and even our passion for our faith, it is the path Jesus walked. It is the only path that demonstrates all of the virtues we seek to defend, including our faith, human rights, justice, democracy, and the right to life for others. We cannot violate peace in the pursuit of peace.

People like Karin, Jean Paul, and the founders of We Love Willowdale powerfully demonstrate that even in the face of great trials and tribulations, it is possible to persevere in the path of peace. In so doing, we sow and will reap peace in our families, communities, countries, and world. May God bless you as you pursue your personal path to deeper peace. #



Carole St. Laurent is an award-winning writer, blogger, and vlogger. Her organization, CryPeace.org, was recognized with a Wilbur award in 2017 for excellence in the communication of religious faith and positive values in secular media. Her work aims to nurture empathy and peace by sharing stories from around the world, including Rwanda, Uganda, Israel, Cyprus, and Turkey.

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