

Ordinary Time, Winter 2024

Reflection

A new year is upon us. A new liturgical season is upon us, as well. Many people use this time to make resolutions, both appropriate for a new secular year and a new liturgical season. As anyone who regularly reads these reflections knows, Ordinary Time, our current liturgical season, is meant for stepping back and allowing the Spirit to settle in to help us grow in faith through prayer and contemplation. Isn't that what people do when they make resolutions, maybe not with a focus on the spiritual, but with a focus on doing better in their personal lives?

On January 2nd, Brian Lehrer invited people to call into his WNYC radio program with what he referred to as "non-traditional New Year resolutions," i.e. not diet, weight, exercise, or money. As I listened to the callers, I, who never makes New Year resolutions, thought how would I answer that invitation? Immediately I thought: Do more to make peace, but I didn't dwell on how I would do that. Instead, I was distracted by what others were saying. Eventually, it struck me that the resolutions were so self-centered. One wanted to learn to gallop on a horse. Another wanted to learn to fly in a balloon. A woman wanted to become more true to herself and not live so much for others, their opinions of her, and their demands of her. I don't think it's wrong to want to take care of oneself. After all, even Jesus tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves, which, of course, starts with loving ourselves. But really? Not one answer, including the traditional resolutions of diet, weight, exercise, and money, reached beyond self. Maybe that's why we need Ordinary Time, as well as a New Year to make resolutions.

I, for one, should spend more time thinking about how I can do more to help move us closer to peace. How can I be more peaceful in my own life? How can I extend that to others in my daily life? How can I contribute to peace in my community, country, and world?

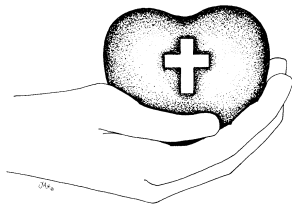
How would you answer Brian Lehrer's question for a "non-traditional resolution," one that goes beyond self to the needs of others? How can you use this Ordinary Time to grow spirituality through prayer and contemplation that extends into action?

I found an answer in a prayer published in the January issue of *Give Us This Day*. It's from the Philippines by way of Catholic Relief Services. I offer it to you as this season's prayer.

Prayer: Bearing Witness to Peace

Lord God, we come to you in our need.
Create in us an awareness of the massive forces that threaten our world today.
Give us a sense of urgency to activate the forces of goodness, of justice, of love and of peace.

Where there is armed conflict, let us stretch our arms to our brothers and sisters.
Where there is abundance, let there be simple lifestyle and sharing.



Where there is poverty, let there be dignified living and constant striving for just structures.
Where there are wounds of division, let there be unity and wholeness.
Help us to be committed to the building of your kingdom.

Not seeking to be cared for, but to care.
Not expecting to be served, but to place ourselves in the service of others.
Not aspiring to be materially secure, but to place our security in your love.

Teach us your spirit.
Only in loving imitation of you can we discover the healing springs of life that will bring new birth to our world.

Suggested Actions

Take any one (or more) of the lines from the prayer above and put it into action in your life. While the prayer asks God to let this or that be, it could easily say let *me* live simply and share, or let *me* strive for justice in my advocacy and action, etc.

Look for actions in your city or town—or organize some—that provide opportunities to witness for a ceasefire in Gaza (on-going), the closing of the Guantanamo Prison (anniversary January 11th), immigration reform at the U.S. southern border that respects the dignity and rights of migrants (on-going), the U.S. ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (anniversary January 22nd), divestment from fossil fuels to reverse the global climate crisis (on-going), or any other cause about which you are passionate. Also call Congress and the White House, sign petitions, write your own letters.

Stay informed about the state of your state, the Union, and the world. Read, discuss, watch, listen.

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