

## Episode: The Gift of Interior Peace

Contributor: Msgr. Fred Dolan

Podcast Page: <https://stjosemaria.org/podcasts/gift-of-interior-peace/>

---

*We are pleased to offer a transcript of this podcast to serve the needs of all our subscribers. Please note, however, that this transcript is generated by AI and may not be perfectly accurate. This content may not be published or reprinted without permission from the St. Josemaria Institute.*

---

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence; I beg your pardon for my sins and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

Jesus, we love learning from your parables. Some of the parables come to us not so much in the form of a story but rather through an episode in your life with the apostles. That is certainly the case in the gospel passage that we read in today's Mass. "On that day, as evening drew near, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us cross to the other side,' leaving the crowd, they took Jesus with them in the boat, just as he was." We can imagine Jesus thinking, "These dear friends of mine are ready for the next lesson." He needed to prepare the apostles for what was to come, and so on this evening he gave them a master class to etch indelibly into their psyche. The fact that God is completely in charge despite the appearances. Well, here's what happened, as we know so well, "as they were crossing the Sea of Galilee, a violent squall came up, and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. In the meantime, Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' He woke up, rebuked the wind and said to the sea, quiet, be still. The wind ceased, and there was great calm. Then he asked them, 'Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?' They were filled with great awe, and said to one another, 'who is this whom even wind and sea obey?'" We too have a deep need for this master class. Often, all too often, we find ourselves perplexed because of all the difficulties challenging us, even during this time of prayer, this conversation with you, Jesus, this or that source of anxiety will come to mind, begging for us to talk with you about it.

Many years ago, St. Josemaria wrote this very important point in *The Way*, "it is necessary to be convinced that God is always near us. Too often we live as though Our Lord were somewhere far off, where the stars shine. We fail to realize that He is also by our side, always, for he is a loving father. We have to be completely convinced that Our Lord, who is close to us and in heaven, is a father and very much our father." Our closeness to Jesus, to you, Lord, will change everything when it comes time to grapple with difficulties. St. John of the Cross, that great follower of Teresa of Avila in the 16th century, he knew that loving confidence in providence was the appropriate response to life's worries and anxieties, John of the Cross had a wonderful image. He observed that when God, like a loving mother, really wants to carry us, we kick and cry and insist on walking by ourselves, and we get nowhere, and most likely fall flat on our face. As the apostles were floundering, perishing out there in the midst of the Sea of Galilee, they would have done

anything to find themselves on firm ground. Well, we too, in the midst of our every day, we need that firm ground, we need to be firmly grounded. And that means developing the capacity to be really present in whichever situation we find ourselves without allowing distraction.

One of my favorite authors is Dietrich von Hildebrand, he always explains things in a way that might strike us as unnecessarily complicated, always deep. For example, speaking of this firm ground, here's how he puts it: "to ordain our daily lives according to some definite rule, constitutes a further method in the service of our inner transformation." That definite rule, we could call it the Plan of Life. It pervades life with a certain rhythm of composure and continuity, which makes it easier for us to collect ourselves, and that Plan of Life, that definite rule protects us from becoming absorbed by the succession of varying events and impressions that so easily interfere with our concentration upon what is really essential. What a beautiful phrase, our life must be imbued with a certain rhythm of composure, continuity, being able to focus on what is really essential rather than being dispersed, always being in a hurry, being filled with anxiety. I recently came across a friend returning from work, it was obvious that he was rather agitated. He is an optician. Why was he upset? Earlier that day, very peacefully attending to a client, all of a sudden the door burst open, and someone came in, oblivious to the fact that she was not next in line, and she explained to everyone present that she was double parked, and she absolutely needed to be attended to immediately, but you can imagine the consternation, agitation to the bad vibrations that such an outburst created. What we're looking for is the exact opposite. This rhythm of composure, continuity, focusing on the essentials.

Way back in the early 30s, St. Josemaria talked about the same thing, that other great point in *The Way*, where he says "Calmness, peace, an intense life within you, without rushing around there in the place that life has assigned to you, like a powerful generator of spiritual electricity, you will give light and energy to so many without losing your own vigor and light." There is another possible enemy of our peace, of our calmness, and that enemy is not being content with whatever it is, wherever it is that we have been placed, whatever it is that we should be doing. There is an incredible scene in "War and Peace," and it's about the young 15-year-old Petya. Here's a young boy, really excited about participating in the war. Here's how Tolstoy puts it. "Petya had been in a continual state of happy excitement at being grown up, and of intense anxiety not to miss any opportunity of real heroism. He was highly delighted with all he had seen and experienced in the army, but at the same time he was always imagining that wherever he was not there, the most real and heroic exploits were at that very moment being performed, and he was in constant haste to be wherever he was not." Well, that's the recipe for being frantic out of control. We ask you, Jesus, to never ever let us get into that kind of a mindset.

A final point that can help us a lot is thinking about those moments when we could be anxious and really not exactly sure why. One very insightful author puts it this way, "If you are anxious about something and it's getting in your way, take what you're anxious about and define it, because that already delimits it." One of the problems with being anxious about something is that you won't speak of it. It's like Voldemort of *Harry Potter* fame, and then if you don't speak about it, it becomes way bigger than it should be, but as soon as you start speaking about it, you have cut it down to size, you're not as afraid of as many things as you think, and you are braver than you know, and more capable, so as soon as you are brave enough to start talking about what you are afraid of, you will see that there is more to you than you thought, and that there is less to the problem than you thought, and then you can deconstruct that big problem into smaller problems, and then figure out how to approach those smaller problems.

Well, Mary, we have been considering a number of aspects of our life in your presence, looking at you, talking with you reminds us you want us to be at peace. Your son gave us his peace, that very precious gift. Help us to do whatever to hold on to that peace and to never ever let go of it.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations that you have communicated to me in this time of prayer. I ask your help in putting them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.