

One

Peace is not the absence of conflict.

St. Augustine in his work, the City of God taught that peace is the fruit of order. So, if you want peace and if you want to be a peacemaker then the first step is to get our lives in order. If we don't want our lives to be aimless, then we need some goal to order our lives toward.

A goal that everyone can agree on is happiness. Everyone wants to be happy. And how might we define happiness? It must mean more than pleasure. Happiness is to possess the good things that fulfill our nature. What do you need to be happy?

- Union with God in Jesus Christ, to receive the life of Jesus by the frequent reception of the Sacraments and daily mental prayer.
- Physical and emotional health that comes from sleep, nutrition and hydration, exercise, hygiene, shelter, clothing, stability and variety, order and surprise
- Relationships with family and friends
- Meaningful work in which we do some good for others
- Knowledge, our intellect needs to be fed by reality in the form of truth
- Beauty, our emotions/passions need to be nourished by reality in the form of beauty

Can you think about anything else you want that doesn't fit into one of these categories? You may say love. Love is one of the many virtues that help us get the good things we need like relationships. How about money, time, and power? They are not goods in themselves, just means to goods. Their only point is that they have the potential to get

something else. In fact, if we had all the good things we need, we would not need money, time, or power.

Two

We need a way to organize our lives to reach happiness and holiness.

St. Pachomius (+348); Basil (+379) and Benedict (+547) suggest a Rule of life. I like to call it a Recipe of Life. We need the right ingredients in our life, in the right order, and in the right proportion.

- Our Recipe of Life needs to include...
- Physical and Emotional goods
- Sleep
- Personal hygiene
- Nourishment and hydration - meals
- Exercise
- Prayer - Friendship with Christ, at least thirty minutes each day in Meditation/Rosary
- Frequent the Eucharist and Reconciliation
- Time for Relationship with your family and friends
- Meaningful Work (*In* the home or outside of it). Work is not measured by money but by the good you do for others.
- Knowledge - About God and the good world he created
- Experience beauty in its many forms

Three

Structure and Flexibility

These are the six ingredients to a recipe for happiness. They fulfill the way God designed us. There also needs to be an order to the way we pursue them.

For example: We are not much good at anything without sleep or at least rest, so we go to bed on time and get up on time. And the most important ingredient is God – so time in prayer is the priority – so it should come first.

As C.S. Lewis writes, “Put first things first and we get the second things thrown in; put second things first and we lose both first and second things.”

We need the goods, but we must keep them in order, love the lesser things less and love the greater things more for virtue is rightly ordered love.

And we must be flexible in our pursuit of these. Some days more work is required than others, other days we have more opportunities for relationships and friendships. Some days the pursuit of knowledge and beauty only gets a little bit.

We should be creative in combining two or more of these at once. For example, walking and talking with a spouse or friend at sunset. This gets you friendship, exercise, and beauty.

Four

People object, “There is no way I can get all those ingredients in every day – that’s impossible.”

Cut out the wrong Ingredients and you’ll have time for the right ones.

Track where your time is going. For seven days keep track of where you spend your time every thirty minutes. Then cut all of the bad ingredients out of your life. Especially all the distraction that comes from news,

entertainment, and your phone...And then you will have time for the right ingredients.

Five

Avoid distraction and use your free time well.

The goal of our life is transforming union with Jesus. This might surprise you, but God wants to give himself to you at every moment, through the good things of life. That means that every part of my life, every moment, can be an avenue to receive God. If we are doing good things then each thing becomes a way to grow closer to God – be it the sacraments or prayer, taking care of my physical health by sleep, food, exercise...work, doing good for others and for the world, all my relationships, growing in all kinds of knowledge and experiencing the many forms of beauty.

Why would you ever want a break from that? Why would you ever want to distract yourself from that?

The mystics have called this the sacrament of the present moment. Just pursue good things at every moment and you will receive God and you will be happy and the fruit will be peace.

And when you are at peace, then you can spread peace wherever you go.