

**Our Lady of LaSalette “LaDame”**  
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Society for Peace

In the second and third meetings of the Seek Healing and Find Peace Lenten Series in Society For Peace, founder Sr. Carmela Chetcuti gave us an opportunity to contemplate both forgiveness and inner healing.

At our February 19 meeting, we were reminded of Christ’s plea from the cross, “Father, forgive them...,” and that forgiveness is a gift, neither earned nor deserved, that God gives us out of love. The Old English meaning of forgiveness is ‘sending out’ and can be seen as a letting go, a changing of attitude, an understanding or an acceptance, but not as an exoneration of guilt. God allows us to make the choice to offer or accept forgiveness. Whenever someone commits a transgression against us, we make a conscious, yet sometimes difficult, decision whether or not to forgive. Once we choose to forgive, we can experience the cleansing of the heart and mind of a burden so we can move on with our lives. At times we need to forgive ourselves, or let go of the guilt or shame we feel when we’ve sinned. And there are other times, when bad things happen, that we want to blame God. Sr. Carmela reminded us that God is the force of love, and doesn’t need to ask permission for anything, so if we remain angry at God, who has promised to stay with us through the good and bad, we are being self-destructive. As difficult as it may be, we are told to let it go – give it to God, our loving Father, who waits for us to ask for His help.

The topic of the March 4 meeting was *Living Peace in the Heart*. Sr. Carmela anchored the session with Ezekiel 36:25-28 – “I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities...I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit in you...” She stressed the importance of dropping the facades we project that conceal what we don’t want others to see, or that hide what we have in our hearts that makes us depressed, angry, shameful or fearful. For instance, if I rant and rave against a particular group of people, could it be an unconscious attempt to conceal something inside myself that makes me feel unhappy, weak or maybe unworthy? And addictions often result when a person wants to drown out pain or shame. She encouraged us to ask God for a clear heart so we’re not “walking through a cloud of our own anger,” and for a forgiving heart to halt negative thoughts, which can make us physically and emotionally ill, when we get hurt.

Sr. Carmela suggested an exercise: pick one virtue and take some time to work on incorporating it into our lives. For instance, if we are searching for hope, we should try to understand that hope is the opposite of despair. How do we get the despair out of our hearts? We might start by asking God to heal us.

*Peace*

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