

I was so fortunate to have been able to spend time this past summer on an island along the New Jersey Shore. Most times when I have quiet moments of contemplation such as I had while on holiday, my thoughts seem to spiral down unsettling paths. I think of personal loss. I think of our deteriorating planet. I think of societal unrest spanning the globe. I think of fracturing familial and interpersonal relationships. I think of the human suffering, unnecessary disparities, all manners of discrimination, and all the injustices decaying the fabric of our society. The sadness and fear shake me, and so I turn off the inner dialog, and read a book, listen to music or tune in to an uplifting podcast.

But recently, I received an email from my bible study group. The message was - - and I paraphrase - - when you enter into solitude to meet the Lord and be with him, the primary task is not to pay attention to all that assails you, but instead to focus your mind and heart and thoughts on our Savior. When you focus all attention on Christ, realizing and embracing that He lives in you, then you can begin to let go of fears and unsettling thoughts.

It's strange how in the course of any busy day, sometimes riddled with struggles, trials and tribulations, dilemmas, challenging interactions, or even just the minutia of work-related tasks, we will often lose sight of the bigger picture. We forget where our focus should be. And once we zoom out of the distractions and zoom back in on that primary task of focusing all attention on Christ, we find calm, clarity and peace. Curious too is how all at once a message can be put before you that speaks so directly to the moment.

As I sat on the deck overlooking the island this message came to me. I remembered in that moment to "*Let Go and Let God*". In doing so, I felt happiness and gratitude

for life. As I looked over the rooftops to the east and saw the ocean at low tide and to the west where the purple sun began to set over the stillness of the bay waters, my heart was filled with gratitude for all the blessings God has placed in my life. I am blessed to be a part of the St. Francis parish and to know its leaders, to know all those in the parish who hold the reins and keep the parish alive and to know and have opportunity to work with this vestry group. It is God that has blessed me with a daughter who lights up my life. I am blessed by Him for the time I was given with a spouse who cared more about me and our daughter than life itself. I am thankful to God for family and friends, and also for the flowers and grass, the trees and birds, the ocean and bay, the rivers and lakes and streams, the wind and rain, the sun and clouds. And for so much more.

I am thankful that it is Christ who lives inside of me and who wants me to focus on Him. So when I put my focus in the place it is meant to be the demons are disarmed and fade away.

I find my calm, my clarity, my peace.

I wish the same for each of you.