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Opportunities

Why not get together with colleagues to discuss and pray what it would mean to eliminate hurry and worry from your life. Download the workbook – [read, pray, and ponder](#)



For those who appreciate a podcast to ponder, slow down with John Swinton as he reflects on his book [‘Becoming Friends of Time’](#)



Print out one or two of these [prayers on calmness](#) and put them where they can be seen daily to pray



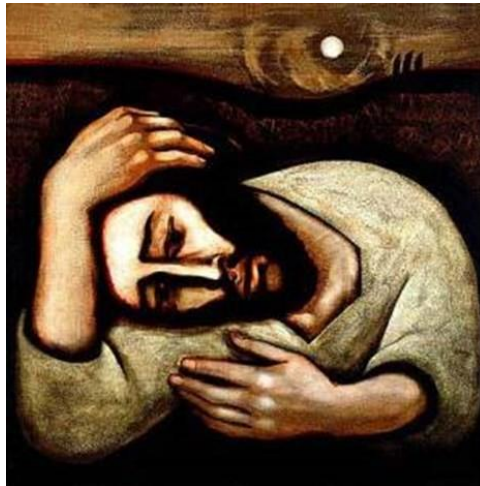
Sign up for Brian Draper's latest [pre-advent and advent retreat](#)



Are you feeling ‘burnt out’ in your Church ministry and life? Gillian Straine (Society of St Raphael) [talks with Alex Soojung-Kim Pang about his book Rest](#). He is a Silicon Valley-based consultant and writer.



Hurry and Worry?



Why are we always in a hurry?

Almost always, when you ask someone how they are, they will reply, ‘Very busy, not enough time in the day,’ which could be a way of saying I’m in a hurry and don’t have much time for you. And yet this seems so contrary to the life of Jesus.

‘Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.’ Psalm 27:14

Thomas Merton once said that the biggest spiritual problem of our time is efficiency, work, and pragmatism; by the time we keep the plant running, there is little time and energy for anything else.

Henry Nouwen said, “For every kind of reason, good or bad, we are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion.”

Prayerfully Ponder Mark’s Gospel: The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

An example of how hurry can blind us to reality was once given in an experiment carried out by a group of American psychologists.

Do you need to slow down and draw closer to God?

They took a class of young theological students, settled them in a room at one end of a large hospital, and then told them that they were participating in an experiment in verbal retention. Each of the students would be asked individually to go into a room where a psychologist would read a passage to them, and the student would then be sent down the long corridor to the other end of the hospital where he would be asked to repeat what they had heard. Their words would be recorded, and this verbal retention would be measured by comparing the words with the original passage.

In fact, the psychologists had other aims in mind than testing the student’s verbal retention. Half of the students, read a variety of passages, but the psychologists read the Parable of the Good Samaritan to every one of the others. They then stationed a man in an alcove halfway along the corridor and had him lie on the ground, battered- looking like the man in the parable. The psychologists were intent on discovering whether the percentage of those who stopped to help the battered-looking man increased among those who had heard the parable as compared with those who had heard a different passage. They discovered that the percentage of those who stopped to help the battered man was not high and was not appreciably higher among those who had heard the parable than among those who hadn’t. Many who rushed to get to the end of the corridor to complete the task didn’t even seem to notice the man. Hurry blinds us

St Seraphim of Sarov was a Russian who spent 30 years as a hermit in a forest. On one occasion, a student from Kiev, 400 miles away, heard of Seraphim’s holiness and set off to walk all the way to the monastery of Sarov to seek the holy hermit’s advice. He eventually found Seraphim’s hermitage which was several miles behind the main monastery in a thick forest. When he arrived, there was no initial sign of Seraphim. Then he noticed the hermit curled up like a squirrel in the thick grass, sleeping after working his vegetable garden. For a long time, the student stood and gazed at the sleeping holy man. As he did so, a great peace came upon him. The spiritual conflict that had brought him all the way to Sarov was resolved, and without even waking Seraphim or exchanging a word with him, the student set off straightaway to walk the 400 miles back to Kiev. Here was a holy man who had learned, through silence, to speak without words and who could resolve spiritual conflicts even in his sleep. ‘Silence’ said Seraphim, ‘is the cross on which man must crucify his ego’.