

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

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# *Authentic and Creative: Walking the Caritas Path to Peace*

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*In our lives, . . . we can walk the worn and weary path to war or walk the less traveled path to peace. . . . The Caritas Path to Peace is not the well-worn path, it is a path only angels have treaded. You can't see their footprints—you must make your own.*

—Lane, Samuels, and Watson (2012, p. 16)

### ■ WHY NURSING?

It was my sister who always wanted to be a nurse. She had the medicine bag giving out “happy pills” (gummy bears). She carefully examined my little brother and me whenever we were troubled. My mother was an Air Force Nurse and worked throughout my childhood. The family moved every two years, as my father was a career military officer. As a child, I wanted to be a teacher, artist, or movie star. I clearly had stars in my eyes. My mother was a small Sicilian woman, somewhat progressive, but not quite. I once told her I wanted to be a lawyer and she bluntly told me, “No, Mary, only men become lawyers. Women become nurses, teachers, mothers, and wives. Being a nurse will help you become a better mother and wife, so I would study nursing.” In total frustration, I believed her. After a very troubled and rebellious adolescent period, being confused, running away, and getting involved with the wrong boyfriend, my parents decided I needed to be on my own. I needed to figure out a way to survive and get myself through a very painful time in my life.

I always knew I wanted to go to college. That was my goal. I worked part-time, took a full load of classes, and became one of the very first female students in the whole country to be admitted to the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC). Since I was paying my own way, I hoped for a scholarship; every male cadet received a full scholarship. After I marched with these young men for two-and-a-half years in the broiling

Florida heat, training alongside them, learning artillery skills, I was informed that only the male cadets would receive the scholarships. I still remember my gunnery sergeant screaming in my face, nose-to-nose, that I would never make it. Yes, just like in the movies! That is as far as I got to becoming a movie star. That very issue would later be taken to the Supreme Court, but not by me. So I chose to pursue Navy nursing. After my acceptance at nursing school, President Ford suspended the navy nursing scholarships for the next two years. Life has twists, turns, and transformations. Regardless of how I got there, I became a nurse and was committed to serving the profession. I discovered I loved—and still love—everything about it.

How did I, a nurse, get interested in creativity and peace? I was a nurse who became a mother and wife. I discovered that my life as a woman, nurse, artist, activist, and writer was my destiny and spiritual journey. It all seemed to come together on a single day, when I felt a profound inner shift that revealed my true essence; the day that made me realize why I became a nurse in the first place.

It was 9/11 and I watched the World Trade Center come down on television, feeling the fear and paralyzing sensations of shock permeate my bones. It was a turning point in world history. I was unable to comprehend what was happening. It became very evident very quickly that this was a moment in time my country could choose peace or war. I believed in peace, understanding, and forgiveness . . . that was the answer I felt in my heart.

What could I do for peace in this pivotal time? How could I bring in the light? I could combine my nursing knowledge of caring for patients who were very ill or nearing end of life with being an artist, promoting and role modeling the transformative nature of creativity. By this time in my career, I had already delved deeply into the healing dimensions of creativity (Samuels & Lane, 1999, 2000a, 2000b). In a very real sense, war is the ultimate life-threatening illness, and peace the ultimate life-saving treatment and preventive medicine. So, I asked myself, How do nurses call on and apply creativity to take care of patients with cancer who may die? How do we bring back hope in desperate situations, create change for healing, bring the healing power of spirit, and even promote a miracle?

To answer those questions, I looked to my research study at the University of Florida College of Nursing documenting how creativity helped heal patients with life-threatening illnesses. At that time, I had helped to cocreate the UF Health Arts in Medicine program at University of Florida based on Dr. Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring (see Chapter 16). My research study showed that creativity helped patients find love and compassion. The research revealed themes that creativity helped patients get in touch with their inner wisdom, with their soul or spirit. This access to creative expression gave patients hope, rallied their bodies' own healing forces, and connected patients to something larger than themselves.

Caring and health promotion is simple: It can prevent war. How can nurses make a difference? What do we need to do to stop violence? Nurses are already peace activists. Nurses follow a calling to serve humanity, and they do not do it for money or power. Who better can become the world leaders for peace? Nurses are the global activists for health and caring. Wars kill tens of millions of people. Wars kill innocent women, men, and children. In the 20th century alone, wars killed more than 200

million human beings. Is it not time we stopped? Is it not time we reacted to problems and crises in a new way?

These questions continued to pull at my heart and mind and so I began a book with my coauthor, Michael Samuels, MD, about peace the day after 9/11. First, it was called *The Path to Peace*, and it was about reacting to violence outside us in creative ways, with forgiveness and compassion. We worked on it for several months while continuing to explore and write about other visionary healing tools and practices (Samuels & Lane, 2002). We became committed to the completion of the project as the “war on terror” continued, the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts persisted, and other militant groups and acts of terrorism threatened the world. This writing became our offering, our prayer, our solace for world peace. It asks simply: Can nurses guide the violence of the world toward a more inner and outer experience of peace?

Dr. Watson invited us to rewrite the book for the Caritas Peace Conference in Hiroshima, Japan, in June 2011. It was in Hiroshima that the International Charter for Human Caring and Peace was shared with the world (Watson Caring Science Institute, n.d.). This experience led us to rename the book *The Caritas Path to Peace*. It is a call to nurses worldwide to stand up as advocates for world peace: a call to stand up and take their place in the global struggle . . . to be empowered . . . to be heard.

In writing the book on peace, we found that we could often substitute the title “Caritas Nurse for Peace” for the words “healer” or “peacemaker.” This in itself was a profound teaching. We realized that the Caritas Nurse for Peace is a healer of the self, of relationships with others, and to the world. When you make peace, you heal your own woundedness, you heal others with love, and you prevent more woundedness from being born. Creativity, love, and compassion are powerful tools for both healing and peace.

This is really why I became a nurse.

## ■ EARLY IMPRESSIONS

After 9/11, I had no doubt who I was. I was not confused. The second it happened, I felt hurt, pain, sadness, and fear. But I also reacted with feelings of peace and forgiveness. I yearned for a creative solution that would not cause war. Every time I heard the cries for violence and revenge, I felt it was a disproportionate reaction; I became filled with sorrow.

I was determined to discover “the caring thing to do” in this situation. What confused me was the sheer power of the image of destruction that was being repeated every day by the media. We were attacked and there was deep pain. I was stunned and kept asking, “Why would anyone do this? What were they trying to accomplish? Did I miss something?” I believe in my heart that we as Americans are a people of greatness. We are a melting pot of the global community, people blessed with prosperity, good fortune, and safety. I had a sense of the strength of who we are. And so I continued to ask, “Why?”

What I eventually realized was that we as Americans had an opportunity to change the world and do something radical that had never been done before. In that moment, there was an invitation to deepen our understanding of ourselves and the impact we could have on the world. We needed to understand what we did not yet know as a nation and, also, to forgive ourselves for what we may have done in the past. We also needed to

forgive “them” for their attack. I was aghast, and yet, it was my desire to reach out over the ocean to understand how this could have happened.

How can we do the right thing to heal the world? I searched for what I could do in this moment, after having been assaulted, that could bring world peace. I felt tears in the depth of my soul and a powerful compassion toward the victims. That compassion extended to the people we had inflicted harm on in the years past who felt the need for revenge. I spent the next days dealing with my own feelings. Others around me seemed twisted with hatred. The general consensus was that since the act was violent and hateful, we should react with violence and hatefulness too. It seemed to me that if we were not careful, we would turn into what we were afraid of. I could see that this event had become a crossroads in every person’s life that demanded an answer: Will you choose war or peace?

As I looked at my own life, the earliest parts of my life journey, I began to see why I reacted as I did. I believed in caring and forgiveness. I began to understand why caring was actually the choice for peace and war was not. In my personal life I have been raped, physically abused, abandoned, and had my voice repressed, and—finally—I learned to forgive. This was because of my own inner conviction to care and my determination to believe in miracles.

As a little girl of seven years, I lived in Turkey, immersed in the Muslim world. My father was a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force. He was a diplomat, an advocate for the Middle East International Relations. He was in the U.S. military intelligence, representing the Turkish point of view in the conflict between Turkey and Cyprus. As a child of a military officer, I spent most of my life abroad.

During World War II, my father liberated one of the concentration camps in Germany. When I was a little girl, he took us there and showed us the horrific consequences of human ignorance, cynicism, and cruelty. As a child, I felt myself a part of a global world and proud to be an American. I was honored to experience liberty, prosperity, and justice for all. I was just a child with dreams.

But then came the 1960s and another event that formed who I was happened in the American South. The Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in front of the house of a black friend who had been in my fifth-grade class. She told me what it was like to have rocks thrown in the front door and through the windows of her home. She huddled behind furniture in total fear, surrounded by hatred. She asked me, “What do they hate?” I looked at her stunned and confused. I did not understand.

My personal experience of pain and violence continued in high school. During the race riots, I was viciously beaten, kicked, and stuck with pins by eight black girls. I was trapped inside a bathroom in the school being beaten when a tall black boy came in, chasing the girls away, and rescuing me. He picked me up in his arms and carried me to an ambulance. In the chaos, I was feeling both attacked and saved by the same people. The white students came to my house wanting to hunt and beat up the girls who had hurt me. This was not what I wanted to do. I stopped them. No . . . I wanted to forgive them.

As a young teenager, I was in a relationship with a boy who repeatedly abused me. Still, I believed love could heal everything; sadly, this was not the case. Just loving someone does not necessarily change things, but it was a powerful lesson. During the time I was with him, I was beaten, raped, thrown over a balcony, and had my back and arms broken.

I was stalked for months on end. I fell into a spiral of panic, trembling in fear when I was alone. An aggressive prosecutor wanted to put him in jail and wanted me to press charges. I did not want to send another human to jail; that would not help him. I learned from this abuse that love does not necessarily change the other person, but acting out of love does heal your own life. Forgiving someone will allow you to let go and let your life go on. Forgiveness frees you to move on and accept your own pain and suffering and ultimately move beyond. I moved beyond and never looked back.

Many years later, when I was in the midst of a painful divorce process, I was hysterical in despair and fighting. My husband had left me with two young children. I was in total pain, experiencing an uncontrollable anger. The fight raged, my own body was bloodied, and I saw that all my anger did not get me anything. The rage and anger just hurt me more deeply. I saw that in every battle, I came out more wounded than before. I realized that all that happened was I would explode and go nowhere. The essence of life was taken from me by my own doing. Instead of the pain being inflicted on me by others, I was inflicting it on myself. I needed to forgive myself. I finally let go of wanting something I could not have and believed the world would accommodate the dream of what I wanted. One day, in the midst of this letting go and forgiveness, my husband knocked at the door and asked if he could come home. In my heart, I made a decision of total forgiveness and surrender. He came home and the power of forgiveness was born within me deeply.

On that day, I made a commitment to be on a spiritual path, to choose the path of love, compassion, and forgiveness. I did not know what that path was, but each life experience had become a thread, which led me more deeply within. I realized then that my life had become a challenge, a test. This was a commitment to a way of being, not necessarily to a way of understanding. Things can be too complex to understand all the moving pieces. But I could commit to a way of approaching or moving away from the toxicity of emotions that self-inflicted more pain, not necessarily to understanding everything or being able to reach a conclusion. As my life moved forward, forgiveness became embodied. It was my life lesson to learn and it resonated with the core essence of my being. It deepened my understanding of caring.

The crisis of 9/11 changed my life, as it did for countless others. My life lessons had accumulated into something that emerged in that moment. They are not a philosophy or a discourse but a personal experience of what has worked for me. I realized that my own life was the lesson that led me to know forgiveness, caring, and compassion. I turned the experience of abuse into my commitment to being an advocate for world peace.

## ■ PROFESSIONAL EVOLUTION/CONTRIBUTION

My life's work: I am a Caritas Nurse. I teach others to connect with their inner Caritas Nurse. The Caritas Nurse for Peace is the wise one within. She or he has always been there and spoken to you in your days of despair and pain. She or he was with you during your own birth and the birth of all your children. This wise self holds strong, steady, and still. It has the ability to exhibit compassion, caring, wisdom, and love in every aspect of life. These qualities come forth in relationships with others, in spiritual practice, and in all aspects of clinical work. The Caritas Nurse is an archetypal position in our culture.

The Caritas Nurse stems from ancient times when healers were herbalists, midwives, nurturers, and community activists. The archetypal Caritas Nurse was worshipped as an aspect of the goddess Hygeia. There have been many evolutions of this goddess throughout history, from Hera, Isis, Athena, and Demeter, to the modern founder of nursing, Florence Nightingale, to Dr. Jean Watson. The Caritas Nurse is involved in taking care of others and taps into the ancient traditions and wisdom of the past from the earth. The Caritas Nurse is expanding beyond the traditional nursing roles to include all ways of caring and expressing the ancient peaceful knowledge within. This peace exists as a vibrational energy, which resonates in the body; this energy exhibits in individual ways since every person is different and unique.

Nurses worldwide strive to create health and wholeness for the people they serve. Peace is the cornerstone of wholeness and health and Caritas is an ethical and philosophical foundation for creating peace. Nurses have a covenant with the public to serve and care. The Caritas Nurse is the healer, the teacher, the lover, the giver, the mother, and the father. The spirit of Caritas is deeply connected to the earth, to family, to friends, to animals, to the environment, and to all of nature. We can see the earth deeply; seeing the earth moving through her seasons. We can feel the wind, know when nature stirs, and recognize the beauty inherent in the pulse of life.

## ■ MORAL/ETHICAL FOUNDATION

Watson's theory (2005, 2008, 2012) and 10 Caritas Processes™ have guided my nursing practice and my life (see Table 16.1). These processes are constantly changing—organic and experiential. They have provided me with the ability to articulate and create a language to shift my way of knowing. They are the essential nature of nursing as proposed by Florence Nightingale more than 150 years ago. They are from the clinical essence of what nurses are actually doing but often do not describe. They make the invisible become visible. The 10 Caritas Processes™ are the foundational steps to living a peaceful life.

The steps do not depend on what political party you vote for or whether you are conservative or liberal. They do not rely on your belief in a specific war or your support of troops; they are based on your hope for peace and come from the spiritual part of you within. The techniques are based on the steps Watson uses to teach nurses loving and caring in hospitals; they come from many of the world's wisdom traditions and from modern practices of psychology and conflict resolution. We believe that the path to peace starts within. From the practice of caring–healing ethic within, we move outward into the world to care and heal for others. First, we change our own understanding and awareness—then we act. First, we change our own consciousness—then we change reality.

You must start by making self-peace. You do this by embracing altruistic values and practicing loving-kindness with yourself. It is the first step toward forgiveness and toward feeling love and compassion for others. In Buddhist meditation, you go to a place where there is total compassion. You go to a place where you re-story your life from a foundation of compassion and love . . . becoming compassionate to yourself by seeing yourself from a distance, from the outside. Stand back and say, “Look at her. She needs . . .” In a moment of witness, of reflection, see what you need to heal, and complete the sentence on your own. When you see yourself with compassion, you can tend to your

body as a sacred vessel and tend to emotions as natural forces that move through you. You can honor intuitions and insights, you can be illuminated to find your place in the world. When you feel the energy of love flowing through you, you will heal yourself and be able to become a Caritas Nurse for Peace. When you feel compassion for yourself, the compassion will flow to others and peace will result. This is an ethical foundation for all nursing practice.

Compassion is a kind of love; it joins your light with another's. If you are ill, it joins you to a healer; if you are a healer, it joins you to the person you are healing; if you are making peace, it joins you to your enemy. When you are in compassion, you flow beyond your boundaries and merge with the person you are with. You see them without judgment, you see them with God's love. You see them as beautiful, as sacred . . . you see their spirit instead of their personality. God's love and compassion are natural, it is a feeling from the heart. It is not God telling you to seek vengeance.

The Caritas Nurse for Peace who sees with compassion sees the enemy in a different way. Yes, you may be angry, but you can teach yourself to see those around you with compassion and invite them to see you in this way too. Your love is felt by everyone and it helps them love you with compassion too.

In compassion, show your light. Compassion breaks the cycle of violence that leads to more violence. There is nothing more ethical than practicing and embracing this way of being and becoming in the world.

## ■ VISION

The hope is that every nurse, each person, understands the impact of doing his or her own individual peace work on the self and in the world. Integrity, presence, intention, and commitment are states of mind that actualize and inform your way of being and empower your actions. You can greatly increase your ability to live in peace by using these tools. Peace work is inner work projected outward. It is about faith and hope and honoring others. Intention and commitment give us focused ways of increasing our resolve and motivation. They clarify our purpose and make us decisive in our actions.

We can increase our ability to live in peace by using personal integrity. Our ability to live in peace comes from our authenticity as human beings. That is why a Caritas Nurse for Peace has a deep commitment to integrity. The Caritas Nurse for Peace is honest about the presentation of who she or he is. People of peace are sincere in their intention to support the people around them for who they are. They listen to a person and look to see that person clearly. They honor the integrity of a person's actions and respect people for their diversity.

Integrity comes from your core essence. The physical world you experience around you vibrates with the essence of who you are. What you are in the external world vibrates and resonates from your internal world, your essence within. If you stripped yourself down to your essence and built upon that, each step would create integrity. Each feeling, each article of clothing, each authentic act would be an embodiment of Caritas. Integrity is a commitment to yourself and the full expression of that self in the world.

In Caritas, authentic presence is both a way of being and an action. Authentic presence lets you be *Ubuntu*, a term originating from South Africa that relates to humanity and human kindness; it can be translated as, "I am because we are." We are one even

with the person we are in conflict with. It is a powerful tool for peace. To be effective is to be present in the here and now. To be totally present, you need to shift away from the ordinary talking in your mind. Pause, slow down, stop your mind chatter. Put aside your daily concerns such as who picks up your child or dealing with your car repair bills. Put aside the things that are distracting your attention. Breathe and deliberately do not focus on distractions. You can deal with them later . . . be present with yourself first.

To use presence as a Caritas Nurse for Peace, face any individual you are working with to make peace. Look at the face . . . look into the eyes . . . look at the person as if this exchange of energy and intention is what your entire life is about in this moment. You are in communion with the person; part of being with the person is seeing him or her. See the color of the hair, the eyes, the skin. Watch the gestures. Allow yourself to be empty, allow the person to fill you up. Use your sense of smell, touch, and sight. See the face unveiling its essence to you. The unveiling of the person's face has to do with the unveiling of your face. You become accessible to yourself at the moment you allow the other to come forward. Presence means the person is inside your own heart. You feel and know him or her deeply as you feel and know yourself.

An important part of becoming an effective Caritas Nurse for Peace is to consciously embody Caritas, intentionally practicing caring in order to make peace real. It means dealing with fears and blockages, with anger and hate, with resistance and personal issues. The Caritas Nurse for Peace way of being is a lived experience, not a theory. It returns us to our earliest impressions, the trajectory of our lives, and professional evolutions. It is the basis of our own moral and ethical foundations.

The Caritas Nurse for Peace is my vision for nursing. It goes up against my most personal issues of ego, anger, faith, evil, confidence, trust, power, and purpose. Being a Caritas Nurse for Peace is about being authentically who you are with intention. That is challenging. This teaching is about healing your own defensiveness and attachments to being right . . . going out in nature . . . meditating . . . learning to hear your own voices of wisdom within. Heal your own life by seeing who you really are and learning to love and accept yourself and others. Trust that this is possible.

Trust is about developing dependable, helping, caring relationships. Let the conviction of your own truth empower you to right action. Let it come from the place of power in your belly. Let it emerge from your center in pure form. Go to the conviction of your own truth and harness that power. The world needs you right now—do not doubt it for one second. Your conviction is like a psychic laser beam of light for the truth. Express it fully in right action. This is how your life manifests your choice for peace. Take your conviction for truth and place it in your gut. Use it to move you forward. Express your pure truth for peace in any form you can—through teaching others, in church, in your business, in conversations with friends, in art, in political action, in civil disobedience. Empower your conviction—you are not alone—you are part of a collective of merging and emerging consciousness. You can change thought and action with this commitment to conviction.

Let us turn the crisis of the moment into the best thing that has ever happened. For the first time in history, people all over the earth are seriously questioning war. For the first time, people are seriously asking themselves if war is an answer, if war can be stopped, if war is a way of being that can continue on earth.

Illness, like war, can be a powerful force for change. A life-threatening illness, such as cancer, can change a person's priorities in a moment. A person can decide to change



his or her life, to love family, to change work, to move. Ask yourself what you would do if you had one year or one month or one week to live. This question is not academic. Cancer patients ask themselves this each day. What are your priorities? This introspection is a timely doorway. Let us not turn away from it. Let it bring unity for peace and empowerment to individuals all over the earth.

Forgiveness is a crucial step in creating peace. Forgiveness is about promoting and accepting positive and negative feelings as you authentically listen to another's story. Self-forgiveness is the first step in creating inner peace. First, forgive yourself for not being the person you want to be. Forgive yourself for your apathy, your lack of concern, your turning away from people in need. Forgive yourself for doing business and not making enough time for family and loved ones. Forgive yourself for not feeding the hungry and not working for peace. Forgive yourself for not stopping war. Move on to become a Caritas Nurse for Peace now. Accept and love yourself for your own imperfections. (See Chapters 19 and 26 for more on forgiveness and personal-professional healing.)

Art is the manifestation of our visions for peace. Creativity is about creating solutions and using caring decision making for peace. Use your creative life force to become a source of inspiration and energy that propels you to cocreate Caritas fields of peace with others. The creative process will give you the energy to increase this vibration with passion. Passion helps you tap into the eternal spring of creativity that flows within you. We are the earth and our creativity connects with the earth. Tap into the vortex of your creative energy. When you connect with the power of creativity, it awakens, nurtures, and heals you. As your creativity emerges through you, it heals the earth, as it emerges from the earth. Making art is healing in itself. Making art for peace is the earth making peace.

Prayer, art, and healing come from the same place: the human soul. The creation of art is an act of prayer in which we create harmony and balance within ourselves through extrinsic expressions of the inner world. In the creation of art, we respond to our hopes and problems in a creative way. We create images that emerge from our soul in response to our dreams and visions. We take a vision from our wisdom within and externalize it so everyone can see it. Art was transformative in ancient times; it was the way the shaman helped control the hunt, fertility, and even the weather. Art changes reality by transforming consciousness.

The Caritas Nurse for Peace makes art to learn how to find creative solutions for peace and to heal himself or herself so he or she can do peace work. The process of making art is one of seeing into visionary space; it is the same process the Caritas Nurse for Peace uses as she or he tries to access a heightened plane of problem solving. When a person makes art, the images that come to her or him are creative ideas. They can inform us about what to do next, about decisions and actions. Art can be engaging for an audience; it can rally support and free emotions. A dance for peace can express emotion and move people to action.

Actively reconstruct your own future. Engaging in teaching and learning experiences that honor another's views is a way to peace. Nurses are teachers and they need to be able to meet other persons where they are now. They need to understand where the other is to be able to help; they need to know someone is ready for advice or life change. This is their way of awakening and transforming people's consciousness. The Caritas Nurse for Peace teaches people to move into a new place in the nurse's constructed reality for peace. Move into a place where you construct reality yourself, not where you accept a

reality made by another and then blame the other person for it. Move past the old construct of war dominance, hatred, and imprisonment. It is time for humankind to move past this ancient place of territorial hatred. Move to a new place and replace what does not have integrity.

A world based on who is rich and who you know and who has the biggest guns is passé. There is another way. We all know this. The basis of all popular revolutions has been an evanescent glimpse of the new reality over the horizon. Healing environments for peace include basic comfort, removing toxic stimuli, and dealing with cold, hunger, and noise. Healing environments for peace also include therapeutic touch, massage, and love. Dealing with poverty, pollution, ugliness, the destruction of nature . . . these are all crucial to preventing war. Protecting people from war and violence is about basic safety. War is an ultimate destruction of environment, dignity, autonomy, and aesthetic surroundings. War and violence are the opposite of treating the environment as sacred. Indigenous cultures looked at the world, its animals and plants, and the earth as sacred, as our mother.

Creating sacred space is a first step to creating an environment for peace now.

You are sacred.

All of life is sacred.

Let us begin.

## ■ REFLECTIONS

1. *How do I offer myself? In what ways do I make an offering of my inner wisdom and values?*
2. *What practices of creativity can I cultivate to go into my own inner spiritual and visionary journey, finding my own place of peace within?*
3. *Ubuntu: "I am because we are." What does this mean to me as a person, a nurse, and a peacemaker?*
4. *How do integrity, presence, intention, and commitment inform my nursing practice and healing mission?*
5. *What is peace? What is inner peace? How can I manifest and sustain human caring and peace in my heart, mind, and daily acts?*

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