

Friends,

### **Silent Night, Silent Morning, Silent Sacred Moments**

At the bottom of my emails I placed this quote:

*Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit.  
Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset.*

*- Saint Francis de Sales*

As I logged in my computer at work this morning, Saint Francis' words reminded me of a friend's experience this Christmas and his ability to hold on to his inner peace.

It wasn't beginning to look a lot like Christmas, but rather the Christmas season was in full brilliance. Lights twinkling all over town, Bing Crosby crooning away all the classic tunes, presents being wrapped in shiny paper, and children waiting in jubilant anticipation. Churches had signs declaring the coming Prince of Peace, Immanuel, and baby Jesus to be celebrated by choirs, pageants, and live nativities. Hot chocolate was soothing cold hands and scratchy throats from playing in the unexpected and record breaking snow this year.

For one man it was a different kind of Christmas. He spent the day before Christmas Eve with his family and had a glorious time as usual in their loving bond. The next morning brought shock and fear. Their precious, loyal, and kind best friend of many years, went missing. He was a chocolate lab and had an old soul kind of essence about him. His name was Hunter. Any time in the past when Hunter explored the neighborhood he returned to his happy home, but not this Christmas Eve. Hunter's "human" spent hours canvassing the neighborhood, posting signs, using social media, and calling upon friends to pray. His church was having a candlelight service on Christmas Eve, and he had invited friends and family. Torn about what to do, he went to the Christmas Eve service. Anxiety was not easily shaken as the loving man continually checked to see if he had updates from anyone. He listened in the service though, and he lifted his voice in praise during this service of celebration of Jesus Christ. He prayed. He believed. Christmas wasn't just a time for him to celebrate Jesus this year. Christmas became a time to lean on Jesus for strength, comfort, and hope. The gentle man even found the strength to lead his family and friends in communion and prayer in a display of faith.

He left the church and used the abilities God gave him to once more search for Hunter, without success. He was invited to a midnight candlelight service with a friend. The friend said that she understood if he did not feel like going. Again, the man had done all he could in his search. He stepped out on faith to worship Jesus under the stars and welcome Christmas with other believers, as they lifted candles lit with hope in singing Silent Night at midnight. What a still and Silent Night it had become. How amazing it was to witness this man maintaining his inner peace in the middle of the unknown as he chose to step into the silence and believe.

The morning came and did not bring any update or news. He had a silent night and then a silent morning. His family and friends continued to share the information and pray. They declared their faith that Hunter would come home and prayed he would return before the man's sons arrived to celebrate Christmas with him. How devastated these young boys would be if their father had to tell them their beloved dog was gone. How stressful and overwhelming for the father to think this was the message he would have to share with them.

Psalm 37:4-5 states, "Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act." This passage of promise that God *does act* in our lives rang with the Christmas bells to break the silence. Within minutes of the boy's arrival, the man received a call that his dog had been found. It was in fact Hunter. The boys never had to participate in a moment of that grief and anxiety. They were spared. Tears of joy and relief poured down the cheeks of this weary father. He declared the work of the Lord in this perfect timing. He took a moment to be silent once more. This time he chose to be silent in the presence of God as he allowed comfort to settle in, and took the time to allow this resounding sacred moment to connect him to his Savior. He realized his children had been spared a very different kind of Christmas than the joyous one they were now having.

It was so much like a Christmas movie with a happy ending of children, pets, family, and Christmas hope fulfilled.

Every prayer does not turn out the way we hope or plan. God does act though. He is continually acting on our behalf. God also allows us to have feelings and faith at the same time. One does not cancel the other. My friend had surging emotion during this tension, which was absolutely normal to the situation. Yet, he maintained his faith and his inner peace while no peace could be found in his circumstance. Take the time for those silent moments to realize those blessings, be present with God, and maintain your inner peace just as my friend did this Christmas.

Rest in the peace of Jesus,

*Chaplain Kim Crawford*

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*And do not forget to do good and to share with others,  
for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:16*