

MAY 22 2025, FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

"Abide in my love."

It's such a beautiful phrase.

I have a lot of people asking me, "How can I come into deeper relationship with God?" And this abiding in love—for me, it's about following the peace, the peace in our hearts.

Living clean lives, as Jesus says, means following the Ten Commandments. Follow the commandments and follow that peace in our hearts. Avoid getting involved in other people's business. Be straight.

In the first reading from Acts, the council also basically says: follow the Ten Commandments, stay away from strangled animals, and from eating blood.

Now, I don't think that's a problem anymore in our world—at least in our culture—that we eat meat from strangled animals. But the other instruction they give is to stay away from sexual relationships outside of marriage—fornication.

Stay away from it.

So many people get stuck in it. It seems to me that maybe—I'm not an exception—but every second person I see is struggling with sexual relationships. It just seems to be.

In our society today, we live in such a lonely world. So many family relationships have broken down. So many people are looking for connection, looking for love.

And this is something each one of us longs for. To be human is to want to be loved, to want meaningful relationships.

So many people get caught up in relationships outside of marriage. It's something so easy to fall into, because it's alluring. I see it all the time. People can go so far off in that area.

Not long ago, I spoke with a young man who came to me, very desperate for relationship. There was a lot of drama in his life.

He had met a woman from an escort service—he was paying her to be nice to him. He thought, “Hey, this could go somewhere. Maybe I can have a long-term relationship with her.”

That's desperation.

I said, “Hang on a minute. You are paying her to be nice to you. Don't you see this?”

We can get so caught up in these things.

These days, with the whole AI world, people are forming virtual relationships. So many get caught in that too.

But the true relationship is with God. That's what brings peace.

We can search all over—in many relationships, outside of marriage, in whatever we are doing—but real, peaceful relationship is with God.

A God who knows each hair on our head. Who knows us inside out. Who just wants to be with us.

But if we get caught up in the world and all its troubles, we end up in the wrong relationships.

Today's saint, Saint Rita of Cascia, knew that too.

She lived in the 15th century, born in 1381, died in 1457. She was married off at age 12 to a brutal husband, Paolo Mancino, who was very abusive and immoral. It was a time of family feuds, and he was eventually murdered by someone from a rival family.

Saint Rita always wanted peace. At the funeral of her husband, she forgave the murderers. She wanted no trouble.

An uncle—her husband's brother—persuaded her sons to take revenge and answer violence with violence. Saint Rita prayed and begged the Lord to prevent this.

She even said, "Lord, take my sons if they are going to answer with violence. We want them in heaven, not in vengeance."

Within a year, both sons died of dysentery. After that, she was able to reconcile the feuding families and bring peace.

She later entered an Augustinian community, where she spent 40 years in prayer. She knew what peace was. God is peace.

To abide in God's love is to be peaceful, to always seek that peace—especially in the troubles of this world.

There are many messages we can draw from Saint Rita of Cascia. That's why she is the patroness of abused women and impossible causes.

Because she abided in God's love. She knew that peace is in God, and that real love is found in a quiet, peaceful relationship with God.

Amen.

