

## PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY ADVENT SERVICE – week 4

*Third week of Advent – [Readings are from Monday, December 21st](#)*

**Welcome**

**Opening song**

Singer will be the only one unmuted but feel free to sing along wherever you are!

**Lighting of candles on the Advent wreath**

As our special guests, the Naro family, light their Advent candles tonight on behalf of us all, we invite everyone on the call to light their own candles wherever they are.



**First reading:** From the Song of Songs...

*Hark! my lover—here he comes  
springing across the mountains,  
leaping across the hills.  
My lover is like a gazelle  
or a young stag.  
Here he stands behind our wall,  
gazing through the windows,  
peering through the lattices.  
My lover speaks; he says to me,  
“Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one,  
and come!  
“For see, the winter is past,  
the rains are over and gone.  
The flowers appear on the earth,  
the time of pruning the vines has come,  
and the song of the dove is heard in our land.  
The fig tree puts forth its figs,  
and the vines, in bloom, give forth fragrance.  
Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one,  
and come!  
“O my dove in the clefts of the rock,  
in the secret recesses of the cliff,  
Let me see you,  
let me hear your voice,  
For your voice is sweet,  
and you are lovely.”*

The word of God. (Response is: Thanks be to God.)

**Gospel reading:** From the gospel of Luke...

*Mary set out in those days  
and traveled to the hill country in haste  
to a town of Judah,  
where she entered the house of Zechariah  
and greeted Elizabeth.  
When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,  
the infant leaped in her womb,  
and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,  
cried out in a loud voice and said,  
"Most blessed are you among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.  
And how does this happen to me,  
that the mother of my God should come to me?  
For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,  
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.  
Blessed are you who believed  
that what was spoken to you by God  
would be fulfilled."*

The gospel of our God. (Response is: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.)

**A reflection from this year's Advent-Christmas reflection booklet** by Michelle Sherman, who recently served on Pax Christi USA's National Council. The readings and her reflection are taken from today, Monday, December 21<sup>st</sup>. Michelle works at Villanova University as the campus minister for retreats outside of Philadelphia & currently works with the PCUSA Young Adult Caucus. She authored ["A Prayer for Peace and Solidarity in A Time of Pandemic"](#) and coauthored the Advent 2018 booklet.

*Here he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows, peering thru the lattices. My lover speaks; he says to me, "Arise, my beloved, my dove, my beautiful one, and come!" (Sg 2:9b-10)*

*In the first reading from the Song of Songs, the line about the beloved "gazing through the windows, peering through lattices" calls to mind Br. Robert Lentz's Christ of Maryknoll icon. The iconography here is striking—Jesus gazes through a barbed wire fence to meet the eyes of the viewer and is even pulling down the pieces of wire at the lower part of the image—symbolically taking down a barrier in between him and the viewer. Lentz, a Franciscan friar, describes the image: "The icon does not make clear which side of the fence Christ is on. Is he imprisoned or are we? Through our cultural institutions and personal lives we all place barriers between ourselves and true happiness. We and our institutions also try to imprison Christ in various ways, to tame him [...]." A commitment to Gospel nonviolence invites us to always return to the person of Jesus as our model for building a just world. It also requires us to name and remove the barriers that keep systems from being incarnations of love, justice, equity, and peace – especially when those barriers are woven into the very fabric of a culture. This summer, Pax Christi USA's statement after the killing of George Floyd identified one such barrier: "white fragility cannot block the conversations we need to have on race within our Church."*

**> What barriers are keeping your community, church, or nation from being incarnations of love, justice, equity, and peace? Which barrier or wound are you being most invited to draw closer to and be part of the healing?**

## Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's reading and the question: **What barriers are keeping your community, church, or nation from being incarnations of love, justice, equity, and peace? Which barrier or wound are you being most invited to draw closer to and be part of the healing?** After our prayer service is over, we encourage you—if you are with others—to share your answer to tonight's question. If you aren't with others but would like to share in a small group after tonight's prayer, we'll send everyone who stays on the call into breakout rooms with a few other people to share for about 15 minutes immediately following the prayer service.

(In preparation for the Prayers of the Faithful, feel free to enter into the chat any prayers you have that you want those of us on this call to lift up over the coming week.)

## Prayers of the faithful

Our response is: God of love, hear our prayer.

## Closing prayer

*(In 1-2 minutes everyone who wants to stay on the call will be sent to breakout rooms to discuss tonight's reading, reflection and Advent question. Breakout rooms will automatically close after 20 minutes.)*