

PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICE – week 2

First week of Lent – [Readings are from Tuesday, March 15th](#)

Welcome

*We'll be remembering tonight: **Sue Malone**, long-time member and leader in Pax Christi Massachusetts; **Tom Keene**, long-time member and leader with Pax Christi Texas; and Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace **Jim McGinnis***



Opening song

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

Opening Prayer: On Pax Christi USA's 50th Anniversary

God of Peace and Justice,

As we journey through our 50th Anniversary Year,

Make us weavers of your peace that will only come through justice,
taking up the threads of peacemakers who have gone before,
adding our collective contributions with creativity,
and making space for future generations to join this tapestry.

Keep us firmly rooted in your love,
love that transcends time and space.
Guide us with clarity of vision
to study the past in order to learn from history
and heal wounds that still hurt us.

Let us acknowledge your presence as we look to the future.
Nourish our enthusiasm,
Help our dreams emerge,
and enable hope to blossom.

Together, we will learn from one another,
amplify prophetic voices,
and weave the work of peace, justice,
mercy, and love that transforms.

We ask all of this through our brother Jesus,
Way of Nonviolence,
Weaver of Peace.

ALL: Amen.

First reading: From the prophet Isaiah...

Hear the word of God,
rulers of Sodom!
Listen to the instruction of our God,
people of Gomorrah!

Wash yourselves clean!
Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes;
cease doing evil; learn to do good.
Make justice your aim: redress the wronged,
hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow.

Come now, let us set things right,
says God:
Though your sins be like scarlet,
they may become white as snow;
Though they be crimson red,
they may become white as wool.
If you are willing, and obey,
you shall eat the good things of the land;
But if you refuse and resist,
the sword shall consume you:
for the mouth of God has spoken!

The word of God. **ALL: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel reading: From the gospel of Matthew...

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying,
“The scribes and the Pharisees
have taken their seat on the chair of Moses.
Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you,
but do not follow their example.
For they preach but they do not practice.
They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry
and lay them on people's shoulders,
but they will not lift a finger to move them.
All their works are performed to be seen.
They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels.
They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues,
greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation ‘Rabbi.’
As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’
You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers.
Call no one on earth your father;
you have but one Father in heaven.
Do not be called ‘Master’;
you have but one master, the Christ.
The greatest among you must be your servant.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled;
but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

The gospel of our God. **ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

A reflection from this year’s Lenten reflection booklet – former Pax Christi USA Executive

Director Dave Robinson: Dave will read his reflection and offer a few additional words to expand it to include the context we’re living in today.

Having told us how we are to relate to one another, Jesus turns to how we are to perceive and respond to structural power and the hypocrisy that often accompanies such power. He does not question the Law nor does he question the scribes’ and Pharisees’ roles in its maintenance. Rather, he condemns the example they set by their behavior: “Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example.” He then offers a litany of examples of why they should not follow their example.

Hypocrisy by institutional leaders remains one of the hallmarks of today’s religious and political landscape. From the abuse scandal to the pandemic, we are confronted today with a level of hypocrisy that undermines our institutions and shatters relationships often with tragic and deadly results. Jesus reminds us that power is a conferred quality. And he also reminds us that legitimate power is only conferred by God. Therefore, and once again, he offers a counter to the hypocritical expressions of power: “The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts themselves will be humbled; but whoever humbles themselves will be exalted.”

What counter-example do you offer in your own life to the hypocrisy of religious and political leaders?

Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings and reflection, and to consider this Lenten question from Dave’s reflection: ***What counter-example do you offer in your own life to the hypocrisy of religious and political leaders?***

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 into breakout rooms with a few other people to share. We'll take now just about 3-4 minutes of silence to reflect quietly.

(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 mercy, hear our prayer.

Closing prayer

(Adapted by Rosemarie Pace, from an “Ash Wednesday Blessing” from Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers)

Merciful God, you called us forth from the dust of the earth;
you claimed us for Christ in the waters of Baptism.
Look upon us as we observe these Forty Days ...
and bless our journey through the desert of Lent to the font of rebirth.
May our fasting be hunger for justice;
our alms, a making of peace;
our prayer, the chant of humble and grateful hearts.
All that we do and pray is in the name of Jesus for
in his Cross you proclaim you love forever and ever. Amen.

*(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 Lenten
question. Breakout rooms will automatically close after 20 minutes.)*