

PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICE – week 3

Third week of Lent – [Readings are from Tuesday, March 22nd](#)

Welcome

*We'll be remembering tonight: **Sr. Mary Evelyn Jegen, SNDdeN**, founding member, former National Coordinator, Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace; **Nancy McDonald**, long-time member and leader with Pax Christi Florida; and **Fr. Robert Jones**, long-time member of Pax Christi Southern California*



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 book of Daniel...

Azariah stood up in the fire and prayed aloud:

“For your name’s sake, O God, do not deliver us up forever,
or make void your covenant.

Do not take away your mercy from us,
for the sake of Abraham and Sarah, your beloved ones,
Isaac and Rebekah your servants, and Israel, Rachel and Leah, your holy ones,
To whom you promised to multiply their offspring
like the stars of heaven,
or the sand on the shore of the sea.

For we are reduced, O God, beyond any other nation,
brought low everywhere in the world this day
because of our sins.

We have in our day no prince, prophet, or leader,
no burnt offering, sacrifice, oblation, or incense,
no place to offer first fruits, to find favor with you.

But with contrite heart and humble spirit
let us be received;

As though it were burnt offerings of rams and bullocks,
or thousands of fat lambs,

So let our sacrifice be in your presence today
as we follow you unreservedly;
for those who trust in you cannot be put to shame.

And now we follow you with our whole heart,
we fear you and we pray to you.

Do not let us be put to shame,
but deal with us in your kindness and great mercy.

Deliver us by your wonders,
and bring glory to your name, O God.”

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

Gospel reading: From the gospel of Matthew...

Peter approached Jesus and asked him,

“Lord, if my brother sins against me,
how often must I forgive him?

As many as seven times?”

Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.

That is why the reign of heaven may be likened to a king
who decided to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began the accounting,

a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.

Since he had no way of paying it back,

his master ordered him to be sold,

along with his wife, his children, and all his property,

in payment of the debt.
At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said,
'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.'
Moved with compassion the master of that servant
let him go and forgave him the loan.
When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants
who owed him a much smaller amount.
He seized him and started to choke him, demanding,
'Pay back what you owe.'
Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him,
'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'
But he refused.
Instead, he had him put in prison
until he paid back the debt.
Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened,
they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master
and reported the whole affair.
His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant!
I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to.
Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant,
as I had pity on you?'
Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers
until he should pay back the whole debt.
So will my heavenly Abba do to you,
unless each of you forgives one another from your heart."

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 National Coordinator and Teacher of Peace Sr. Mary Evelyn Jegen, SNDdeN: Special guest Beatrice Parwatikar, Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace will read Sr. Mary Evelyn's reflection and offer a few additional words to expand on it to address the context we're living in today.

There can be no reconciliation without a concern for justice. This requires a courageous facing of facts, however painful they may be. But facts can be faced with scorn and a sense of self-righteousness and superiority, or with compassion. If we know ourselves and our society well, we will be aware that there is need for repentance and sincere expression of sorrow and forgiveness on all sides. Forgiveness is not primarily a feeling but a decision, a decision not to let the wrongs one has suffered be the determining factor in a relationship in need of repair. Just as forgiveness is a decision, so the refusal to forgive is also a decision, one that locks an unforgiving person into a prison of bitterness and loneliness. Forgiveness is not easy, but its fruit is a great freedom and peace, even though feelings of hurt and even spontaneous desires for revenge are likely to persist. A person is in a better position to deal with these feelings and to move forward constructively once he or she has made the decision to forgive.

*How have you been bound by a refusal to forgive?
What justice or reparation is necessary for forgiveness to happen in your life or in our society?*

Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings, Beatrice's reflection, and to consider these Lenten questions from Sr. Mary Evelyn's reflection: ***How have you been bound by a refusal to forgive? What justice or reparation is necessary for forgiveness to happen in your life or in our society??***

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 justice, hear our prayer.

Closing prayer

(from Xavier University)

God, you have given all peoples one common origin.
It is your will that they be gathered together as one family in you.
Fill the hearts of humankind with the fire of your love & with the desire to ensure justice for all.
By sharing the good things you give us,
may we secure an equality for all our brothers and sisters throughout the world.
May there be an end to division, strife, and war.
May there be a dawning of a truly human society built on love and peace.
We ask this in your name. 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.)