

PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICE – week 5

Fifth week of Lent – [Readings are from Monday, April 4th](#)

Welcome

*We'll be remembering tonight: **John Bagley**, long-time member and leader with Pax Christi Illinois; **Helen Casey**, former co-coordinator for Pax Christi Michigan and past member of the Pax Christi USA National Council; and **Gordon Zahn**, one of our co-founders who also helped to uncover and then popularize the story of Blessed Franz Jaeggerstaetter.*



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 Psalm 23...

In verdant pastures O God, you give me repose; beside restful waters you lead me; you refresh my soul. You guide me in right paths for your name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil; for you are at my side, with your rod and your staff that give me courage. You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of God for years to come.

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

Gospel reading: From the gospel of John...

Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

So the Pharisees said to him, "You testify on your own behalf, so your testimony cannot be verified."

Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I do testify on my own behalf, my testimony can be verified, because I know where I came from and where I am going. But you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by appearances, but I do not judge anyone. And even if I should judge, my judgment is valid, because I am not alone, but it is I and the God who sent me. Even in your law it is written that the testimony of two people can be verified. I testify on my behalf and so does the One who sent me."

So they said to him, "Where is this One?"

Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my God. If you knew me, you would know my God also." He spoke these words while teaching in the treasury in the temple area. But no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

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

A reflection from this year's Lenten reflection booklet by former Pax Christi USA staff member and interim executive director Ron Cruz:

*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life. (Jn 8:12)*

Later in John's gospel, in chapter 10, the evangelist writes: "A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them."

In life we know that our journey includes many twists and turns, with unexpected events, challenges, pain and suffering. We are fortunate that in our journey we are accompanied by all those that have walked with us in our lifetime, people who were friends, people who loved and cared for us, people who shared their wisdom with us, and those who provided us with the needed support to work things out, one way or another.

Sadly, it is difficult to believe that everything is going to be all right, given the state of affairs in our country and throughout the world.

Struggling to grasp the personal role people need to take to make things better can be overwhelming and depressing. Though many of us know the impact of violence, global threats, and what is right from wrong, living life abundantly has not been made clear by the church, the government, or other institutions we respect. However, it is said that “just because we’re struggling does not mean we’re failing.”

*What lights do you see, even in the midst of the present darkness
that sometimes seems to threaten to overtake us?*

Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings and reflection, and to consider the Lenten question: *What lights do you see, even in the midst of the present darkness that sometimes seems to threaten to overtake us?*

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 2-3 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 hope, hear our prayer.

Closing prayer

(adapted from Pax Christi USA's prayer during a time of pandemic by Michelle Sherman)

Creator God, we look to you during this time of illness, loss, & mourning.

Be with us as we place our grief and fear in your hands.

Free us from the illusion of invincibility, so that we might remember our actions affect others, especially the most vulnerable. ...

Free us from division, so that it can be transformed into caring actions for ourselves and others.

Jesus, our brother, as your ministry of healing brought physical wellness and connection and restored community, help us remember that we are not alone.

As you mourned the death of your friend Lazarus, be with those who grieve the loss of loved ones. May they feel your presence and peace.

As you experienced death, be with those who have died from the coronavirus.

May they be in your eternal embrace. ...

Inspire us to have a global vision of solidarity, a consciousness and priority to provide healthcare to all.

Spirit of God, breath of life, thank you for the countless nurses, custodial staff, doctors, receptionists, therapists, healthcare providers, and all others who have sacrificed to care for those who have been sick and suffering. As they live their vocations, may they be sustained by your Spirit.

Open our eyes to see the devastating implications of economic and racial injustice during this pandemic.

Inspire our actions for equitable access to vaccines, testing, treatment, and financial support for all affected by the coronavirus.

This we pray together 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.)