

PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICE – week 1

First week of Lent – [Readings are from Monday, Feb. 27](#)

Welcome

*We'll be remembering tonight: **Marilyn Elsen**, long-time member of Pax Christi Florida; **Tom Webb**, former National Council member and long-time member of Pax Christi Northern California; and **Sr. Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB**, Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace, Ambassador of Peace, and former national coordinator*

Lent 2023

Witnesses on the way

*So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them.
(John 20: 2)*

Opening song

Opening Prayer:

Spirit of God,
We have heard your call to share in building up the Kin-dom of God.
Fill us with the desire to change ourselves and to change the world.
Enflame our passion for justice into a commitment to address unjust situations and structures.
Deepen our concern for our siblings who endure the burdens of poverty, war, exploitation and persecution.
Let us enthusiastically play our part in the mission of the Church in the modern world.
Banish any complacency in our hearts and minds.
Teach us to recognize the lack of justice.
May we always act in the Spirit of justice.
May we envisage, pray about and create a different sort of world in which injustice is replaced with a renewed sense of solidarity and care.
Enlivened by the Spirit, may we go forth in the peace of the Holy Spirit to love and serve our loving God.

ALL: Amen.

First reading: From the book of Leviticus...

God said to Moses, "Speak to the whole assembly of the children of Israel and tell them: Be holy, for I, your God, am holy.

"You shall not steal. You shall not lie or speak falsely to one another. You shall not swear falsely by my name, thus profaning the name of your God. I am God.

"You shall not defraud or rob your neighbor. You shall not withhold overnight the wages of your day laborer. You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but you shall fear your God. I am God.

"You shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment. Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty, but judge others justly. You shall not go about spreading slander among your kin; nor shall you stand by idly when your neighbor's life is at stake. I am God.

"You shall not bear hatred for your sibling in your heart. Though you may have to reprove them, do not incur sin because of them. Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against others. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am God."

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

Gospel reading: From the gospel of Matthew...

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Human One comes in glory, with all the angels and sits upon a glorious throne with all the nations assembled, the One will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The Human One will place the sheep on the right and the goats on the left. Then the ruler will say to those on the right, 'Come, you who are blessed by God. Inherit the reign prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer and say, 'When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the ruler will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least sisters and brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then the ruler will say to those on the left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.'

Then they will answer and say, 'When did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' The ruler will answer them, 'Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.' And these will go off to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

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

A reflection from this year's Lenten reflection booklet – Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace Kathy O'Leary: Kathy will read her reflection and offer a few additional words to expand it to include the context we're living in today.

*The ruler will place the sheep on the right and the goats on the left. Then the ruler will say to those on the right, "Come, you who are blessed by God."
(Mt 25:33-34)*

I am sorry Jesus, but I love goats. Goats have attitude. They climb mountains, eat anything and they are joyfully rebellious. They create their own paths. In this world of violent oppression I just want to be like a goat munching its way through the poison ivy and bleating defiantly in the face of injustice. But I know that it is your path that you are calling me to walk on and it is your work that you are calling me to do. I must be still, stop bleating and listen to hear you. Maybe you are calling me to be defiant to earthly authority and to strike out on new paths. But I know you are always calling me to join with your other

sheep in a loving, joyful, hopeful community. Goats have no penchant for community. Goats are too busy to recognize you in the suffering of your sheep. And though goats may climb mountains, they can never possess your vision.

Read the [Romero Prayer](#) and contemplate how the “goats” of Matthew’s gospel might assume the role of “master builder.” Consider when in your life you might have behaved as a goat and substituted your vision rather than listening for where God was leading you.

Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings and reflection, and to consider this Lenten question from the Kathy’s reflection: ***Consider when in your life you might have behaved as a goat and substituted your vision rather than listening for where God was leading you.***

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 peace, hear our prayer.

Closing prayer

Prayer for Peace in Ukraine

Adapted by Nancy Small

God of Peace, whose light dispels the darkest night,
we pray for the people of Ukraine at this time of warfare and violence.
Give comfort to those who suffer and calm to those who live in fear.
Grant eternal life to those who have died and consolation to those who mourn.
Companion those who are fleeing their homeland and grant them a safe haven.
Open the hearts of those who live in neighboring countries as they welcome refugees.
Convert the hearts and minds of those who choose arms and protect those who wage peace.

God of hope, inspire leaders to seek reconciliation with enemies by embracing nonviolence.
Give diplomats wisdom, understanding and insight and lead them in the way of peace.
May the universal church be salt and light in this dark time.

Inspire compassion in the hearts of all your people
and give us hope for a world where justice rolls down like water
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace and Light of the World,
who taught us “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God,”

through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace. 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.)