

PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICE – week 3

Third week of Lent – [Readings are from Friday, March 17](#)

Welcome

*We'll be remembering tonight: **John Downing**, longtime member of Pax Christi Metro DC; **Sr. Betty Donaghue**, longtime member of the Terre Haute Pax Christi chapter; and **Nickie Valdez**, former National Council member and member of the Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team*

Opening song

Opening Prayer: A Litany of Women for the Church

Dear God, creator of women in your own image,
born of a woman in the midst of a world half women,
carried by women to mission fields around the globe,
made known by women to all the children of the earth,
give to the women of our time
the strength to persevere,
the courage to speak out,
the faith to believe in you beyond
all systems and institutions
so that your face on earth may be seen in all its beauty,
so that men and women become whole,
so that the church may be converted to your will
in everything and in all ways.

We call on the holy women
who went before us,
channels of Your Word
in testaments old and new,
to intercede for us
so that we might be given the grace
to become what they have been
for the honor and glory of God.

Saint Esther, who pleaded against power
for the liberation of the people, –Pray for us.

Saint Judith, who routed the plans of men
and saved the community, –Pray for us.

Saint Deborah, laywoman and judge, who led
the people of God, –Pray for us.

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)*

Saint Elizabeth of Judea, who recognized the value of another woman, –Pray for us.

Saint Mary Magdalene, minister of Jesus, the first evangelist of the Christ, –Pray for us.

Saint Scholastica, who taught her brother Benedict to honor the spirit above the system, –Pray for us.

Saint Hildegard, who suffered interdict for the doing of right, –Pray for us.

Saint Joan of Arc, who put no law above the law of God, –Pray for us.

Saint Clare of Assisi, who confronted the pope with the image of woman as equal, –Pray for us.

Saint Julian of Norwich, who proclaimed for all of us the motherhood of God, –Pray for us.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who knew the call to priesthood in herself, –Pray for us.

Saint Catherine of Siena, to whom the pope listened, –Pray for us.

Saint Teresa of Avila, who brought women's gifts to the reform of the church, –Pray for us.

Saint Edith Stein, who brought fearlessness to faith, –Pray for us.

Saint Elizabeth Seton, who broke down boundaries between lay women and religious by wedding motherhood and religious life, –Pray for us.

Saint Dorothy Day, who led the church in a new sense of justice, –Pray for us.

Mary, mother of Jesus, who heard the call of God and answered, –Pray for us.

Mary, mother of Jesus, who drew strength from the woman Elizabeth, –Pray for us.

Mary, mother of Jesus, who underwent hardship bearing Christ, –Pray for us.

Mary, mother of Jesus, who ministered at Cana, –Pray for us.

Mary, mother of Jesus,
inspired at Pentecost, –Pray for us.

Mary mother of Jesus,
who turned the Spirit of God
into the body and blood of Christ, pray for us.

ALL: Amen.

First reading: From the book of Hosea...

Thus says God: Return, O Israel, to your God; you have collapsed through your guilt. Take with you words, and return to God, saying "Forgive all iniquity, and receive what is good, that we may render as offerings the bullocks from our stalls. Assyria will not save us, nor shall we have horses to mount; We shall say no more, 'Our god' to the work of our hands; for in you the orphan finds compassion."

I will heal their defection, says God, I will love them freely; for my wrath is turned away from them. I will be like the dew for Israel: you shall blossom like the lily; you shall strike root like the Lebanon cedar, and put forth your shoots. Your splendor shall be like the olive tree and your fragrance like the Lebanon cedar. Again they shall dwell in your shade and raise grain; They shall blossom like the vine, and your fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

Ephraim! What more have you to do with idols? I have humbled you, but I will prosper them. "I am like a verdant cypress tree" – Because of me you bear fruit!

Let the one who is wise understand these things; let the one who is prudent know them. Straight are the paths of God, in them the just walk, but sinners stumble in them.

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

Gospel reading: From the gospel of Mark...

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: Hear, O Israel! God, our God, is one. You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, God is One and there is no other. And to love God with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And when Jesus saw that the scribe answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the reign of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions

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 Judith Kelly: Judith will read her reflection and offer a few additional words to expand it to include the context we're living in today.

Jesus replied, "The first is this: Hear, O Israel! God, our God, is one. You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, & with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mk 12:30-31)

At the World Cup, the team from Iran played with all its heart, soul, mind, and strength to overcome Wales, nicknamed the "Red Dragons." Before fans both for and against the revolution in their country, the Iranian team worked with every shred of energy to win. With grit and heart-stopping perseverance, they scored two goals in the very last seconds. They never gave up. Was it a win for their country or in support of people risking everything for change? Soon after the U.S. team defeated Iran to go on to the next round, with the shameful subtext of the U.S. government's past actions, and the current political impasse with the leadership in Iran. There is so much more to this simple game. Do opposing players live out the call to "love your neighbor as yourselves?" Moments of mutual respect stand out, despite the fierce competition. Is this a good model for us? Sports are immersed in the political, and as we watch, we need to remember that "God, our God, is one." For all.

How do we love our neighbors as ourselves & appreciate the unique gifts & achievements of everyone?

Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings and reflection, and to consider this Lenten question from the Judith's reflection: *How do we love our neighbors as ourselves & appreciate the unique gifts & achievements of everyone?*

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

Prayer for social justice, by Constance (Connie) Fahey, Franciscan Sisters of Mary

Spirit of Truth
Who enfolds our world in Your Love,
we come to You with a heavy heart.
How does one begin to dismantle the evils
of racism, sexism, classism, environmental injustice
and other ism's permeating society?

Are we complicit with the corporate sin
of societal institutions by remaining silent observers?
How can we be an instrument of peace and
radiate Your healing love?

People like Desmond Tutu, Martin Luther King, Jr.
and protestors marching on our streets
denounce systemic injustices.
We read Scripture's injunctions--love God,
love my neighbor,
pray for my enemies,
even those who persecute me.
Are we heeding these difficult teachings?

Is it enough for us to welcome strangers into
our circle of relationships,
alleviate the suffering of the Lazaruses-on-my-doorstep,
and celebrate the diversity of people and their creeds?

Grace us that we have love for all,
promote justice for all,
and have mutual respect for all creation. 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.)*