

PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICE – week 3

Third week of Lent – [Readings are from Friday, March 8](#)

Welcome

*We'll be remembering tonight: **Jack MacFadyen**, long-time member of Pax Christi Florida; **Diane Dixon Beuerman**, long-time Pax Christi member in Oregon and New York; and **Gerry Vanderhaar**, Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace and founding member of Pax Christi USA*



Opening song

Opening Prayer: “A litany for peace,” by Linda Friern & Tony Bartlett

LEADER: Let us pray to Jesus Christ that we may be set free from the chains of violence & war.

(Our first response is: “Deliver us.”)

Jesus the Christ, by your cross and resurrection

... deliver us.

by your nonviolence and love
by your witness to truth
by your passion and death
by your victory over the grave
from the desire for power
from the conspiracy of silence
from the negation of life
from the worship of weapons
from the celebration of killing
from the slaughter of the innocent
from the extermination of the weak
from the nightmare of hunger
from the politics of terror
from a false peace
from relying on weapons
from the spiral of armaments
from plundering the earth's resources
from the despair of this age
from global suicide.

(Our second response is: “Give us your peace.”)

By the light of the Gospel

... give us your peace.

by the good news for the poor
by your healing and wounds

by faith in your word
by a hunger and thirst for justice
by the coming of your reign
by the outpouring of the Spirit
by reconciliation of enemies
by gentleness and nonviolence
by the truth that sets us free
by prophecy and witness
by persecution because of your name
by the power of your love.

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,
... *have mercy on us.*

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,
... *have mercy on us.*

Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world,
... *grant us peace.*

ALL: Amen.

First reading: From the book of the prophet Hosea...

Thus says God:
Return, O Israel, to your God;
you have collapsed through your guilt.
Take with you words,
and return to your God;
Say to God, "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:
who shall blossom like the lily;
They shall strike root like the Lebanon cedar,
and put forth their shoots.
Their splendor shall be like the olive tree
and their fragrance like the Lebanon cedar.
Again they shall dwell in shade
and raise grain;
They shall blossom like the vine,
and their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

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

Let those who are wise understand these things;
let those who are 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!
Our God is God alone!
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 than God.
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 he 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, by Frida Berrigan

And to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

There it is. "Mic drop," as the kids say.

The heart of the matter, here in plain language on the 24th day of Lent.

In my community, there is a lot of “performative politics.” The LGBTQ flag flies from City Hall at the beginning of Pride Month and our City Council declared racism a threat to public health. But, the police budget stays robust and the young queer people of color feel disrespected when they offer public comment.

The flag and the declaration are the modern equivalent of the burnt offerings and sacrifices – public and overt and inflected with high drama. But these declarations are not ballasted by policy or practice or careful listening.

They are not imbued with love of neighbor and the transformation that comes with love of neighbor: you can’t stay the same and love your neighbor as yourself. It is work that requires change.

My community’s politics are distinct but I am sure you can see parallels or hear echoes in your own local politics. How can “love of neighbor” become part of our politics and policies?

Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings and reflection, and to consider this Lenten question: ***How can “love of neighbor” become part of our politics and policies today?***

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 love, hear our prayer.

Closing prayer

A prayer from “Songs of my People,” by Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA

O, Lord, help us to be attentive to your commands. Help us to walk in unity. Help us to celebrate who we are and whose we are. Help us to overcome selfishness, anger, and violence in our hearts, in our homes, in our Church, in our world. Help us to knock down, pull down, shout down the walls of racism, sexism, classism, materialism, and militarism that divide and separate us. Help us to live as your united people, proclaiming with one voice, our faith, our hope, our love, our joy. 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 15 minutes.)