

Pax Christi USA Lenten prayer service, week 5

April 7, 2025

Welcome - This week we especially remember Sr. Kay O'Neil, founder of Pax Christi South Dakota, and Bishop Tom Gumbleton one year after his death.



Opening song - "Nearer my God, to Thee" (Sarah F Adams and Lowell Mason, 19th c)

Opening prayer

RESPONSE: ***Forgive us, we pray***

For our hardness of heart...	For failing to risk...
For wasting our gifts...	For failing to trust...
For wanting too much...	For failing to act...
For wounding the earth...	For failing to negotiate...
For neglecting the poor...	For failing to hope...
For trusting in weapons...	For failing to love...
For ignoring racial injustice...	For our arrogance...
For refusing to listen...	For our impatience...
For exporting arms...	For our cowardice...
For desiring dominance...	For our pride...
For wanting to win...	For our silence...
For lacking humility...	For our complicity...

RESPONSE: ***Change our hearts***

That we learn compassion...	That we live in hope...
That we embrace nonviolence...	That we might be strong
That we act in justice	That we do your will...
	That we might be peace...

ALL: Amen.

First reading: Genesis 17:3-9

When Abram prostrated himself, God spoke to him: "My covenant with you is this: you are to become the father of a host of nations. No longer shall you be called Abram; your name shall be Abraham, for I am making you the father of a host of nations. I will render you exceedingly fertile; I will make nations of you; kings shall stem from you. I will maintain my covenant with you and your descendants after you throughout the ages as an everlasting pact, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you

the land in which you are now staying, the whole land of Canaan, as a permanent possession; and I will be their God."

God also said to Abraham: "On your part, you and your descendants after you must keep my covenant throughout the ages."

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

Gospel reading: John 8:51-59

Jesus said: "The truth of the matter is, anyone who keeps my word will never see death."

The Temple authorities retorted, "Now we are sure that you are possessed! Sarah and Abraham are dead; the prophets are dead; yet you claim: 'Anyone who keeps my word will never know death.' Surely you don't pretend to be greater than our ancestors, Sarah and Abraham, who died! Or the prophets, who died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"



Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, that glory comes to nothing. But the One who glorifies me is Abba God, of whom you say, 'This is our God.' You haven't come to know God, but I do, and if I were to say, 'I do not know God,' I would be a liar, like you! But I do know God, and I faithfully keep God's word. Your ancestors Sarah and Abraham rejoiced to think that they would see my day – and they did see it, and were glad."

Then the authorities objected, "You are not yet 50 years old, and you say you have seen Sarah and Abraham?"

Jesus answered them, "The truth of the matter is, before Sarah and Abraham ever were, I AM."

At this, they picked up rocks to throw at Jesus. But he hid himself and slipped out of the Temple.

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

(Version: [The Inclusive New Testament](https://www.inclusivebible.org/))

A reflection from this year's Lenten reflection booklet, written by Ralph McCloud

So they said to him, "Now we are sure that you are possessed. Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.'"

We grieve. We feel loss at the death of loved ones. Our hurt is genuine, and our hurt is real. We often tell ourselves that death is a "transition." We hear words of intended consolation like,

“They’re in a better place” or the classic, “They have completed their race.” An African proverb says, “The ancestors never leave us as long as we recall their names.” Jesus says, “Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.” His life and death invites us to everlasting life. He invites us to share in his ministry by keeping his word and enjoying life with him forever.

For us, we often recall the names and memories of saints and holy men and women whose lives inspire us and, in that sense, they still live. They live in our minds and hearts. Jesus invites us however, to a different type of life: a life of peace, tranquility and glory. To get to this life, we face difficulties, struggles, and challenges, but for the ones who keep God’s word, never death. May we stay close to the Word and enjoy life for ourselves and those who will remember us after our “transitions.”

Silent reflection – *We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings and reflection, and to consider this Lenten question: Who are the ancestors whose names you remember? Why and how do you keep them alive? How does this bring life to you?*

Prayers of the faithful

RESPONSE: ***God of peace, hear our prayer***

Closing prayer

Adapted for tonight from *The Fire of Peace and Our Prayers Rise Like Incense: Liturgies for Peace* by Pax Christi USA

O God, we believe that peacemaking means bearing fruit, even in the midst of drought. It means planting seeds even though we may never see the flower. It means never losing sight of the vision promised by You.

We hold fast to Your word that one day swords will be beaten into plowshares.

May we, as peacemakers, stake our lives on that promise.

We ask this through your life-giving Spirit.

Closing song - “Were you there,” traditional spiritual (words adapted by Creede Caldwell)

If you're looking for other resources for prayer, study and action for this fifth week of Lent, go to <https://paxchristiusa.org/lent-2025/>. Thank you for joining us this year for our weekly Lenten prayer services!

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