

Pax Christi USA Lenten prayer service, week 1

March 10, 2025



Welcome

Opening song - Careworn Mother Stood Attending

Text: Jacopone da Todi, 1230-1306, att. tr. Edward J McKenna, b.1939

Music: Stabat Mater, Maintzisch Gesangbuch, 1661

Opening prayer –

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

For our hardness of heart...

For wasting our gifts...

For wanting too much...

For wounding the earth...

For neglecting the poor...

For trusting in weapons...

For ignoring racial injustice...

For refusing to listen...

For exporting arms...

For desiring dominance...

For wanting to win...

For lacking humility...

For failing to risk...

For failing to trust...

For failing to act...

For failing to negotiate...

For failing to hope...

For failing to love...

For our arrogance...

For our impatience...

For our cowardice...

For our pride...

For our silence...

For our complicity...

RESPONSE: ***Change our hearts***

That we learn compassion...

That we embrace nonviolence...

That we act in justice

That we live in hope...

That we might be strong...

That we do your will...

That we might be peace...

ALL: Amen.

First reading: Ezekiel 18:21-28

Thus says the Lord God: If the wicked man turns away from all the sins he committed, if he keeps all my statutes and does what is right and just, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of the crimes he committed shall be remembered against him; he shall live because of the virtue he has practiced. Do I indeed derive any pleasure from the death of the wicked? says the Lord GOD. Do I not rather rejoice when he turns from his evil way that he may live? And if the virtuous man turns from the path of virtue to do evil, the same kind of abominable things that

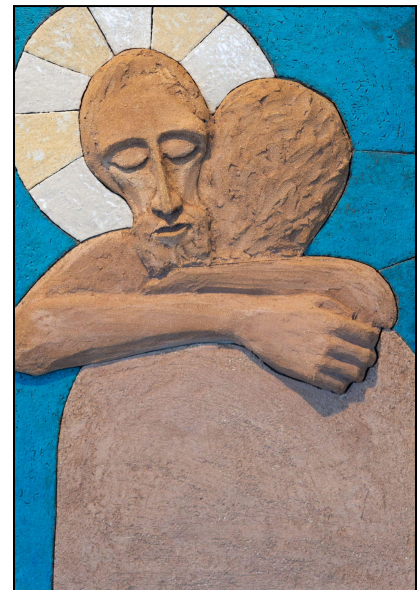
the wicked man does, can he do this and still live? None of his virtuous deeds shall be remembered, because he has broken faith and committed sin; because of this, he shall die. You say, "The Lord's way is not fair!"

Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair? When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die. But if the wicked, turning from the wickedness he has committed, does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life; since he has turned away from all the sins that he committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

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

Gospel reading: Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, 'Raca,' will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny."



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

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

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother or sister has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

One of the primary themes of Lent is the notion of forgiveness, both forgiving our neighbor and reaching out to seek forgiveness. Both efforts can seem daunting, difficult, even unpopular. The

season of Lent invites us to the peace associated with reconciliation, the peace that comes with off-boarding the baggage that comes with the burdens of carrying ill feelings toward others or the anxiety of knowing we have harmed others and remain estranged.

Scripture offers a way forward in both instances. It encourages us to seek the grace required to embolden us to name the truth, forgive, and seek forgiveness. But it cautions us that before we can be truly one with God, we must first lay down our “sword and shield.” That before we are able to adequately worship God, we must be reconciled with our hurting siblings. The effort seems appropriately triangular, that is, seeking God’s grace to embrace forgiveness, then applying forgiveness, and then approaching the altar to worship God. There’s something trinitarian about the journey.

Silent reflection – *We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's readings and reflection, and to consider this Lenten question: **This Lent, who are the people with whom you need to reconcile or forgive? What is stopping you from doing so?***

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 - What Wondrous Love Is This

Text: Alexander Means, 1801-1853

Music: American Folk Hymn, c. 1835

If you're looking for other resources for prayer, study and action for this first week of Lent, go to <https://paxchristiusa.org/lent-2025/>. Thank you for coming and we look for you next Monday night for our second prayer service.

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