

Vigil in case of outbreak of war

The following is an adaptation of the vigil offered in Our Prayers Rise Like Incense: Prayers for Peace (Pax Christi USA, 1998), with several additional readings. This service is written for use at night with a group, but can be adapted to time of day and number, or for individual use.



Preparation of the space: Have a large candle, clay bowl/vessels filled with sand, and smaller candles ready to be lit near the front of the church/room.

Lighting of the candle: One person lights a large candle in the center of the church/room.

Opening song options:

- [Ubi Caritas](#)
- [My Peace I Give You](#) (Taizé)
- [Peace, Be Not Anxious](#) (Lori True)
- [Pax Amor Christi](#)
- [Turn To the Living God](#) (Lori True)

Opening prayer, option 1:

Leader:

God of faithfulness, we come to you troubled by the threat of war, filled with anxieties and questions. What change are we able to effect by prayer before you, by our words, by our deeds? What can we do to bring peace to our planet?

God, we are in need of your grace to unsettle and redirect our hearts. We are in need of your hope to rekindle and sustain our passion for justice. We are in need of your wisdom that we might recognize anew your dwelling presence within us, calling us to live as children of light and hope rather than of darkness and fear.

Be with us in our prayer this night. Help us to truly believe, not only in your abiding in presence within and among us, but in the power of our prayer to move mountains. All this we ask in the name of Jesus our brother, who shares our lives and yours in the unity of the Spirit. Amen.

Opening prayer, option 2:

Leader:

Come, Holy Spirit, breathe upon our troubled world. Shake the tired foundations of our crumbling institutions. Break the rules that keep you out of all our sacred spaces, and from the dust and rubble, gather up the seedlings of a new creation.

Come, Holy Spirit, enflame once more the dying embers of our weariness. Shake us off our complacency. Whisper our names once more, and scatter your gifts of grace with wild abandon. Break open the prisons of our inner being and let your raging justice be our sign of liberty.

Come, Holy Spirit, and lead us to places we would rather not go; expand the horizons of our limited imaginations. Awaken in our souls dangerous dreams for a new tomorrow, and rekindle in our hearts the fire of prophetic enthusiasm.

Come, Holy Spirit, whose justice outwits international conspiracy; whose light outshines bigotry, whose peace can overcome the destructive potential of warfare, whose promise invigorates our every effort to create a new heaven and a new earth, now and forever.

Opening prayer, option 3:

From Pope Leo XIV's March 2026 prayer intention, "For disarmament and peace."

[God] of Life,
you shaped every human being in your image and likeness.
We believe you created us for communion, not for war,
for [family], not for destruction.
You who greeted your disciples saying, "Peace be with you,"
grant us the gift of your peace
and the strength to make it a reality in history.
Today we lift up our prayer for peace in the world,
asking that nations renounce weapons
and choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy.
Disarm our hearts of hatred, resentment, and indifference,
so we may become instruments of reconciliation.
Help us understand that true security
does not come from control fueled by fear,
but from trust, justice, and solidarity among peoples.
[God], enlighten the leaders of the nations,
so they may have the courage to abandon projects of death,
halt the arms race,
and place the lives of the most vulnerable at the center.
May the nuclear threat never again dictate the future of humanity.
Holy Spirit,
make us faithful and creative builders of daily peace:
in our hearts, our families,
our communities, and our cities.
May every kind word, every gesture of reconciliation,
and every choice for dialogue be seeds of a new world.
Amen.

Reading options:

Cesar Chavez, from *Peacemaking Day by Day (Pax Christi USA)*: When we are really honest with ourselves, we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So, it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of persons we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life. I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of humanity is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice. To be human is to suffer for others. God help us to be human.

Attributed to Dorothy Day: As we come to know the seriousness of the situation, the war, the racism, the poverty in our world, we come to realize that things will not be changed simply by words or demonstrations. Rather, it's a question of living one's life in a drastically different way.

A reading from Joshua Casteel, *Letters from Abu Ghraib (Essay Press, 2008)*, pp. 71-72: Every day I talk with the enemy. But I do not see an embodiment of "he who opposes goodness." If we approach the war on terrorism with the fervor of a Christian jihad against Islam, our battle is already lost, for we have become what we opposed and we are now the fundamentalists. Our battle is not one of flesh and blood, but against the spiritual powers and principalities which rule this present darkness. We cannot allow ourselves to be caught up in "war mode" against a fleshly enemy, or the true enemy is already within us, and we have failed to believe in the power of a redemption which (we say) we believe has saved us. ... My comfort and liberty must not be won by the sacrifices of a new and foreign poor now paying the price for our moral failings of diplomacy, economy and statesmanship, turning our Republic into an Empire.

Response psalm: Psalm 13

Side 1: How long, O God, will you forget me? How long will you hide your face from me?

Side 2: How long must I suffer anguish in my soul, grief in my heart day and night?

Side 1: Look now and answer me, O God. Give light to my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death.

Side 2: Lest my enemies say, "I have overthrown them," and my enemies rejoice at my downfall.

Side 1: But for my part, I trust in your true life. My heart shall rejoice, for you have set me free.

Side 2: I will sing to God, who has granted all my desires.

Reading options:

From Narges Mohammadi, Iranian Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2023: Women will not give up. We are fuelled by a will to survive, whether we are inside prison or outside.

From Pope Leo XIV's address to the Diplomatic Corps, January 9, 2026: In our time, the weakness of multilateralism is a particular cause for concern at the international level. A diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks consensus among all parties is being replaced by a diplomacy based on force, by either individuals or groups of allies. War is back in vogue and a zeal for war is spreading. The principle established after the Second World War, which prohibited nations from using force to violate the borders of others, has been completely

undermined. Peace is no longer sought as a gift and desirable good in itself, or in pursuit of “the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God with a more perfect form of justice among men and women.” Instead, peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one’s own dominion.

From Cardinals Blaise Cupich, Robert McElroy, and Joseph Tobin, *Charting A Moral Vision of American Foreign Policy*, January 19, 2026: As pastors and citizens, we embrace this vision for the establishment of a genuinely moral foreign policy for our nation. We seek to build a truly just and lasting peace, that peace which Jesus proclaimed in the Gospel. We renounce war as an instrument for narrow national interests and proclaim that military action must be seen only as a last resort in extreme situations, not a normal instrument of national policy. We seek a foreign policy that respects and advances the right to human life, religious liberty, and the enhancement of human dignity throughout the world, especially through economic assistance.

Prayers of the faithful:

Invite those present to come forward and light a candle and either offer a silent prayer or a prayer for peace out loud, lighting a candle and placing it in the bowls with sand. When everyone has had a chance to speak, offer the following prayer:

All: Lead us, we beseech you, from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. May peace – your peace – fill our hearts, our world, our universe. All this we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen. *(Adapted from the Universal Peace Prayer)*

Closing prayer:

Leader:

May our candles be a symbol, not only of our individual prayers, but also of our common prayer – For a resolution to the current conflict, for a renunciation of the use of armed forces in this region, for serious negotiation, not only in the hope of resolving this current situation, but also to work toward resolution of the broader issues and root causes that cause us to choose war as a solution.

May the light of our candles burning in the darkness remind us of the light of God’s Truth and the power of that Truth to illuminate even the deepest darkness of hatred, mistrust, and fear.

May we believe in this light, take comfort and strength from it, rejoicing in God’s faithfulness and love.

Closing song options:

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- [My Peace I Give You](#) (Taize)
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