

Prayer vigil for peace and an end to war

On Easter Sunday, Pope Leo XIV invited the church to gather in vigil and pray for peace on Saturday, April 11. Pax Christi USA prepared this vigil – adapted from Our Prayers Rise Like Incense: Prayers for Peace (Pax Christi USA, 1998), with several additional readings – for groups to pray in solidarity with the global church and all people of good will. It can be adapted 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](#) (Taize)
- [Peace, Be Not Anxious](#) (Lori True)
- [Pax Amor Christi](#)
- [Turn To the Living God](#) (Lori True)

Opening prayer:

From Pope Leo XIV's "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:

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.

From Pope Leo's "Urbi et Orbi" message for Easter 2026:

The power with which Christ rose is entirely nonviolent. It is like that of a grain of wheat which, having rotted in the earth, grows, breaks through the clods, sprouts, and becomes a golden ear of wheat. It is even more like that of a human heart which, wounded by an offense, rejects the instinct for revenge and, filled with compassion, prays for the one who has committed the offense.

Brothers and sisters, this is the true strength that brings peace to humanity, because it fosters respectful relationships at every level: among individuals, families, social groups, and nations. It does not seek private interests, but the common good; it does not seek to impose its own plan, but to help design and carry out a plan together with others.

Yes, Christ's resurrection is the beginning of a new humanity; it is the entrance into the true promised land, where justice, freedom, and peace reign, where all recognize one another as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father who is Love, Life, and Light.

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 "Urbi et Orbi" message on Easter 2026: In the light of Easter, let us allow ourselves to be amazed by Christ! Let us allow our hearts to be transformed by his immense love for us! Let those who have weapons lay them down! Let those who have the power to unleash wars choose peace! Not a peace imposed by force, but through dialogue! Not with the desire to dominate others, but to encounter them!

We are growing accustomed to violence, resigning ourselves to it, and becoming indifferent. Indifferent to the deaths of thousands of people. Indifferent to the repercussions of hatred and division that conflicts sow. Indifferent to the economic and social consequences they produce, which we all feel. There is an ever-increasing "globalization of indifference," to borrow an expression dear to **Pope Francis**... The cross of Christ always reminds us of the suffering and pain that surround death and the agony it entails. We are all afraid of death, and out of fear we turn away, preferring not to look. We cannot continue to be indifferent! And we cannot resign ourselves to evil!... The peace that Jesus gives us is not merely the silence of weapons, but the peace that touches and transforms the heart of each one of us! Let us allow ourselves to be transformed by the peace of Christ!

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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