

## The Path of Repentance and Peace: Prayers for Peace in Lent (February 2016)

**Leader** By tradition, at the start of Lent – on Ash Wednesday each year – we are marked with a cross in ash, to signify our desire to repent of all that prevents us from following Jesus on his way to the Cross. The violence and fear which provoked the imperial forces of Rome to execute Jesus still dominate our world today – and we have seen graphic images of that from Syria and elsewhere in recent days. In our prayers this evening we come to repent of our sins and to call others into repentance and the love of God.

**All** Call us, Lord Jesus, to seek your way of peace and proclaim it to the nations. A peace that seeks security through love, justice, co-operation and respect. A peace that has as its ultimate security our trust in and love of God.

**Leader** Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God

**All** For the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

**Leader** Even now says the Lord, return to me with all your heart.

**All** With fasting, with weeping and with mourning. When the righteous cry for help the Lord hears and rescues them from all their distress.

**All** In this Lenten season O God, we come before you, asking for courage to open our eyes. We want to see ourselves as you see us: the empty and barren places, the half-hearted struggles, the faint stirrings of new life. We come, trusting your grace, waiting for your word, longing for your healing light. Do not let us be blind to your presence. Shine upon us O God and make our paths clear.

### Dialogue based on Matt 26: 36-46

**1st voice** Then Jesus went with the disciples to a place called Gethsemane: and he said to them

**2nd voice** Sit here while I go to pray.

**1st voice** He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee.

And sadness came over him and great distress. Then he said to them

**2nd voice** My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and keep awake with me.

**1st voice** And going on a little further he fell on his face and prayed

**2nd voice** My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not my will but your will be done

**1st voice** He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter

**2nd voice** Could you not stay awake with me for one hour?

Stay awake and pray not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

**1st voice** Again a second time he went away and prayed.

**2nd voice** My father, if this cup cannot pass by unless I drink it, your will be done

**1st voice** Once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

So he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.

Then he came to the disciples and said

**2nd voice** Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?

See the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Get up! Let us go! My betrayer is already close at hand.

**1st voice** We pray to 'stay awake' to the reality of violence and oppression,

to the reality of war and injustice. As Jesus faced his fear, we too face our fear of the cruel realities of our world and we express our longing for peace and justice.

**2nd voice** Jesus our brother and our saviour, you call us to stay awake and to follow your Father's will.

### Intercessions

O God, tender and just, cut through our denial that we are capable of destroying the earth and its people. Forgive us and help us to remember that you call us to live in harmony with each other, seeing the joy of your creation in our sisters and brothers. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

Holy God, God of all the ages, lead us from death to life, to the stockpiling of hope and possibilities and love, rather than the stockpiling of weapons, or stones to throw, or of hatred.

**Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

We pray for the healing of the earth and its peoples – especially for our sisters and brothers trapped in violence in Syria, the wider Middle East, Ukraine, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic and so many other places. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father we pray for refugees that they may find places of safety and the means to rebuild their lives. **Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

We pray for all who work for peace and justice; for all those who are not silent in the face of injustice and suffering; and for all who take risks for peace. May we be numbered among them.  
**Lord in your mercy hear our prayer**

**Leader** *In this season of repentance we accompany the crucified and betrayed communities around the world who cry out for justice and peace. While we pause for a few moments please come forward and tie a ribbon to the cross. As you do so remember a particular place or a people in need of peace.*

**Leader** *We say together the prayer of St John Paul II*

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victims of all wars and violence among individuals and nations.

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war.

Hear my voice when I beg You to install into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice, and the joy of fellowship.

Hear my voice, for I speak for the multitudes in every country and in every period of history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace.

Hear my voice and grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with the sharing of self, to war with peace.

O God, hear my voice and grant to the world Your everlasting peace. Amen.

**Leader** Let us say together the prayer which Jesus taught us. *Our Father* .....

**Leader** *We close with a blessing which we say together*

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers and half-truths,  
so that we will live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people, so that we will work for justice, equality and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain,  
rejection, starvation and war,  
so that we will reach out our hands to comfort them and change their pain to joy.

And may God bless us with the foolishness to think that we can make a difference to the world and to act in that belief.

May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

*(With acknowledgement to the use of materials posted on the Pax Christi website for Lent 2016)*