Each year the International Day of Peace is observed around the world on September 21. The United Nations General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples.

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 and the first Peace Day was observed in September 1982. In 2001, the General Assembly established September 21 as an annual day of nonviolence and cease-fire.

The United Nations invites all nations and peoples to honor a cessation of hostilities during the day, and to otherwise commemorate the day through education and public awareness on issues related to peace.

Suggested symbols: globe and candle

Opening prayer

Leader: We gather here as a community of believers to celebrate the International Day of Peace. We are reminded that we are all part of one global human family living together in a world that remains broken and divided. We join in prayer in hopes that the universal desire for peace may be realized. Loving God, help us to recognize that you call each one of us to commit ourselves to the effort of peace in the world.

All: Amen.

— United Nations

Opening song

“World Peace Prayer” by Marty Haugen (or another appropriate song)

During the song, the globe and the candle are brought to the center of the gathering.

Scripture reading

John 14:27-31

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; but the kind of peace I give you is not like the world’s peace. Don’t let your hearts be distressed; don’t be fearful. You’ve heard me say, ‘I am going away but I will return.’
If you really loved me, you would rejoice because I am going to Abba God, for Abba is greater than I. I tell you this now, before it happens, so that when it happens you will believe. I won’t speak much more with you, because the ruler of this world, who has no hold on me, is at hand; but I do this so that the world may know that I love Abba God and do so as my Abba has commanded me.”

— Translation from The Inclusive New Testament, Priests for Equality, West Hyattsville, Maryland, 1994

**Silent reflection**

Peace in the whole world, still divided by greed, looking for easy gain, wounded by the selfishness which threatens human life and the family, selfishness that continues in human trafficking, the most extensive form of slavery in this twenty-first century; human trafficking is the most extensive form of slavery in this twenty-first century! Peace to the whole world, torn apart by violence linked to drug trafficking and by the iniquitous exploitation of natural resources! Peace to this our Earth! May the risen Jesus bring comfort to the victims of natural disasters and make us responsible guardians of creation.

Dear brothers and sisters, to all of you who are listening to me, from Rome and from all over the world, I address the invitation of the Psalm: “Give thanks to God for God is good; God’s steadfast love endures for ever. Let Israel say: ‘God’s steadfast love endures forever”’ (Psalm 117:1-2).

— Pope Francis, Easter 2013

**Prayer of intercession**

**Reader 1:** O God, we bring before you all those who live in situations of armed conflict throughout the world. Teach us to open ourselves to your Spirit of peace and search for nonviolent ways to address the issues that divide us, rather than resorting to war.

**All:** God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

**Reader 2:** O God, hear the cries of the poor and the hungry. Help us to recognize Christ in our brothers and sisters, that we may recognize their needs and fill the empty palms they extend to us.

**All:** God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

**Reader 1:** O God, before whom we stand broken, we have failed to recognize your image and likeness among our sisters and brothers. Show us the way to respect and honor the dignity of everyone so that together we may build your kingdom of justice and love.

**All:** God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

**Reader 2:** O God, your son, Jesus, showed mercy upon the children and blessed them with the promise of inheritance of your kingdom. Move us to work to eliminate forces that continually deprive children of their human rights and dignity.

**All:** God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.
Reader 1: O God, you have entrusted your creation to our safekeeping and protection. Give us a sense of reverence for creation and a deeper awareness of our interconnectedness. May we live in such a way to preserve for posterity that which sustains and nourishes all life.

All: **God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Reader 2: O God, listen to the pleas of all peoples threatened with dispossession and the loss of ancestral lands, especially indigenous peoples faced with the loss of their cultural identities. Move us to work to end the forces that seek to dehumanize them.

All: **God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Silently add other prayers for peace that you hold in your heart at this time.

All: **God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

Closing prayer

God of mercy and love,
we praise and thank you,
for you created us all and scattered us
among many different tribes and nations,
that we may befriend one another,
and live together in peace.
Open our hearts, we pray,
that we may respond to the needs
of our brothers and sisters throughout the world,
and all of creation.
We ask you to bless our lands and peoples
with lasting peace and understanding.
Touch the hearts of our political leaders
and all those in power,
that they may exercise power intelligently,
seeking the good of all and
leading us to a place where all
can live together in peace and harmony.
Where there is bitterness, teach us forgiveness and reconciliation.
Replace hatred with love and indifference with care.
We ask this through Jesus, our model of peace and nonviolence.
Amen.

Closing song

Choose an appropriate song.

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Sisters of the Holy Cross

Congregation Justice Committee
Notre Dame, Indiana
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