



international day of peace

prayer service



september 21, 2011

Items needed for this prayer service: a table in the center of the prayer space on which to place a small bowl or a pitcher of water, bread, salt, candle and matches.

Introduction

Leader:

The United Nations General Assembly has declared September 21 as the International Day of Peace. It is to be observed as a day of global ceasefire and nonviolence. The United Nations has invited all member states, organizations of the United Nations system, regional and nongovernmental organizations, and individuals to commemorate the day in an appropriate manner. On this day they encourage education and public awareness about peace and nonviolence, and cooperation with the United Nations in establishing a global ceasefire.

“Twenty-four hours [of the International Day of Peace]: to give relief workers a safe interlude for the provision of vital services; to offer mediators a building block towards a wider truce; to allow all those engaged in conflict to reconsider the wisdom of further violence.”

— Kofi Annan, *United Nations' Secretary General*
January 1, 1997–December 31, 2006

We gather here today 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 the hope that the universal desire for peace may be realized.

Lord God, help us to recognize that you call each one of us to commit ourselves to the effort of peace in the world.

Four persons bring forward the following symbols and place them in the center of the prayer space. As they bring them forth, the leader says:

- Leader:**
- Water:** Let this water be a symbol of our need to cleanse our hearts.
 - Bread:** Let this bread be a symbol of sharing what we have with all those in need.
 - Salt:** Let the salt be a symbol of those who are mourning their loved ones.
 - Candle:** Let this candle be a sign of hope for children around the world.

Call to Prayer: *Recite together*

Great compassion makes a peaceful heart.
A peaceful heart makes a peaceful person.
A peaceful person makes a peaceful family.
A peaceful family makes a peaceful community.
A peaceful community makes a peaceful nation.
And a peaceful nation makes a peaceful world.
May all beings live in happiness and peace.

— Maha Ghosananda, *European Centre for Conflict Prevention*, 1999

Opening Song: “World Peace Prayer” by Marty Haugen or another appropriate song

First Reading: John 20:19-23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Silent Reflection



Second Reading: From *A Peaceful Heart* by Thich Nhat Hanh

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Those who work for peace must have a peaceful heart. When you have a peaceful heart, you are the children of God. But many who work for peace are not at peace. They still have anger and frustration, and their work is not really peaceful.

To preserve peace, our hearts must be at peace with the world, at peace with our brothers and sisters.

Silent Reflection: *How do I work for peace and nonviolence in my community, in my country and in our world?*

Sharing: *Optional*

Intercessions: From *Our Language, Our Story 1.0*, 2009, by the Eastern Ontario Catholic Curriculum Cooperative

Leader: Let us pray for the church, that it will always be a faithful sign and an instrument of Christ's peace. O God, in your goodness...

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Let us pray for the world, that the peace of Christ might take root in every human heart, and put an end to all forms of violence, greed and division. O God, in your goodness...

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Let us pray for our world leaders, that the Holy Spirit might guide them to promote peace and understanding among nations and peoples. O God, in your goodness...

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Let us pray for all persons who suffer due to war and violence, that they might find hope in people's efforts to bring Christ's peace to the world. O God, in your goodness...

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Let us pray for ourselves, that we might become peacemakers with our families, our neighbors and our community. O God, in your goodness...

All: **Hear our prayer.**



Closing Prayer: *Recite together*

Spirit of Wisdom,
may we bear your love for humanity
by bringing good news to the poor.
Acting according to your will,
we will come to know your reign
where all will be seated at your heavenly banquet.
Let us bring food to the hungry,
healing to the violated
and presence to the lonely.
Teach us to shine like the stars
in our relationship with God,
with our neighbor,
and with all of creation.
Lead us in promoting peace and integrity
through our everyday challenges.
May your comforting embrace bring us compassion for others.

— “A Prayer for Compassion” by William Purcell
in *The Notre Dame Book of Prayer*

Closing Song: “How Long Will It Be?” by Kathy Sherman, CSJ, from the CD *Walk With Me* or “Let There Be Peace on Earth” or another appropriate song

Leader: Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

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