

A Prayer of Nonviolence

Sisters of the Holy Cross

Call to Prayer

Leader: The Advent-Christmas season is about God's promise to a people who had walked in the darkness of grief and despair. It is to these people, and to us, that the words of the evangelist John are spoken: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not, and will never, overcome it."

During Advent, the National Gun Sabbath Weekend is observed December 10-14, 2015. As we commemorate the anniversary of the Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting, during which 20 children and six staff members lost their lives, we also pause to remember and pray for the tens of thousands of people who have lost their lives to gun violence since that day.

As we enter more deeply into the meaning of Advent hope this season, we must continue to shine a light on this gun violence epidemic until all gun-related deaths are eliminated. Jesus is the Light that shines in our darkness. As we journey through the darkness of this season, we light our Advent candles, casting the light of Christ, the light of hope, on the epidemic of violence in the United States and throughout the world, and we sing:

—Adapted from Maryann Calabrese, CND, Arlene Flaherty, OP,
"Prayer: Gun Violence Sabbath Weekend"

All: **O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.**

—Traditional, translated by J.M. Neale,
Hymns Ancient and Modern (1861)

Litany for Peace

Leader: From words and deeds that encourage prejudice and hatred;

All: **O God, deliver us.**

Leader: From suspicions and fears that stand in the way of reconciliation;

All: **O God, deliver us.**

Leader: From hearing, believing and speaking lies about other peoples or nations;

All: **O God, deliver us.**

Leader: From the coveting of money or power that so often forms the basis of the drive to kill;

All: **O God, deliver us.**

Leader: From senseless violence and the fear of speaking out against it;

All: **O God, deliver us.**

Leader: From all that prevents the human family from fulfilling your promise of peace;

All: **O God, deliver us.**

—Adapted from Lutheran Peace Fellowship, "Peace Litany"

Reading

It is said when the Chinese entered Tibet, many of the soldiers were very cruel toward the conquered people. They were especially harsh and mean-spirited toward the monks. When the Chinese invaders arrived at one village, the village leader approached them and said, “All of the monks hearing of your approach fled to the mountains ... all of the monks, that is, but one.”

The commander raged out of control. He marched to the monastery, kicked in the gate, and sure enough, in the courtyard stood the one remaining monk. The commander approached the monk and screamed, “Do you know who I am? I am he who can run you through with a sword without batting an eyelash.” The monk gently, but steadily, gazed at the commander and replied, “And do you know who I am? I am he who can let you run me through with a sword without batting an eyelash.”

This monk is a model of a peacemaker. Behold the nonviolent one: disarmed, centered, vulnerable, detached, unafraid of death. The question the monk poses for us is this: How do we become people of peace? How do we practice nonviolence in our own lives? What experiences in life, what methods of prayer prepare us to stand disarmed? Jesus shows us the way to become people of peace.

— *Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, “Behold the Nonviolent One,”
Sojourners, vol. 18, no. 9 (1989), pages 22–24*

Sung Response

**Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord,
And where there’s doubt, true faith in you.**

**Oh Master, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love, with all my soul.**

**Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there’s despair in life, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there’s sadness, ever joy.**

— *Sebastian Temple, “Prayer of Saint Francis,” OCP Publications*

Closing Prayer

Gracious and merciful God,

We pray for the wisdom, compassion and mercy to live our lives in the love and example of Jesus:

- **to strive for peace within ourselves and to be peacemakers in our daily life;**
- **to accept suffering in the struggle for justice rather than inflicting it;**
- **to refuse to retaliate in the face of provocation and violence;**
- **to persevere in nonviolence of tongue and heart;**
- **to live conscientiously and simply so that we do not deprive others of the means to live.**

We ask this in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

— *Adapted from Pax Christi, USA, “Renewal of the Vow of Nonviolence” in
Our Prayers Rise Like Incense: Liturgies for Peace, page 227*

