

Prayer for Peace – November, 2003



Physical setting:

Prayer table draped with a blue or purple cloth.
A simple cross
Some poppies (cut out of colored paper)
An image of the resurrected Christ
Some live flowers
Images of the poor (or destruction caused by war)
Any image that brings to mind the cry of the poor

Opening Comments: (Please adapt for the needs of your age group.)

November is traditionally the month set aside by the church to pray for those who have died. We remember in a particular way those who have fallen for the cause of justice, for the cause of peace. For too long, however, have the peoples of the world, driven by the desire for power, driven by thoughts of world domination, driven by desire to exploit both human and material resources of others, brought needless and meaningless death to countless people. Death has been delivered in many ways: through the use of weaponry, through contamination of water and food supplies, through unjust wages, through a new form of international slavery, where one nation dominates another economically for its own gain.

In a world where so few have so much, the cry of the poor has never been stronger. As we observe pictures of parents holding emaciated children, dying for lack of clean water and nourishing food, people dying from AIDS and denied access to life-extending drugs because of prohibitive costs imposed by profit-seeking drug companies, infrastructures destroyed by expensive “smart bombs” we are reminded of the words from Jeremiah quoted by Matthew in his scriptural description of the Massacre of the Innocents: “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children, she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.” Matthew 2.18.

As we remember and listen to the cry of the poor let us pray for peace that the resurrected Christ brings through forgiveness and reconciliation.

Opening Song: The Cry of the Poor (#93 Glory and Praise)

Psalm 147: God's delight is not in physical strength

Side One: Praise the Lord!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
For he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.

Side Two: The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
He gathers the outcasts of Israel.

Side One: He heals the brokenhearted,
And binds up their wounds.

Side Two: He determines the number of the stars;
He gives to all of them their names.

Side One: Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
His understanding is beyond measure.

Side Two: The Lord lifts up the downtrodden;
He casts the wicked to the ground.

Side One: Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
Make melody to our God on the lyre.

Side Two: He covers the heavens with clouds,
Prepares rain for the earth,
Makes grass grow on the hills.

Side One: He gives to the animals their food,
And to the young ravens when they cry.

Side Two: His delight is not in the strength of the horse
Nor his pleasure in the speed of the runner.

Side One: But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,
In those who hope in his steadfast love.

Side Two: Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion.

Side One: For he strengthens the bars of your gates;
He blesses your children within you.



Side Two: He grants peace within your borders;
He fills you with the finest of wheat.

Reading: Luke 24.36 – 49

Reflection:

1. What do Jesus' words, "Peace be with you" say to you about Jesus?
2. According to Jesus how can we achieve inner peace?
3. Recall a time someone forgave you an offense that particularly hurt him or her. How did you feel receiving that forgiveness?
4. Recall a time that you forgave someone without being asked for forgiveness. How did you feel?
5. How does forgiveness liberate us?

Sharing: After a few minutes invite the children to share something from one of the questions they reflected on.

Ritual Action:

Ask everyone participating in the prayer to take one of the poppies and to write on it (in code if they like) the name of the person that they find most difficult to forgive. Have them also write the name of person they most want to ask forgiveness from.

Prayers of Petition:

We walk day by day past brothers and sisters who have been hurt by us or by others and fail to reach out a helping hand. Sometimes we refuse to hear their cry of distress and walk away ignoring their silent pleas for recognition and inclusion. Let us repent our failures to love our neighbors as ourselves. **(Silence)**

Reader 1: For our failure to feel the suffering of others, and for our tendency to live comfortably with injustice,

All: God forgive us.

Reader 2: For our lack of forgiveness, openness, sensitivity,

All: God forgive us.

Reader 3: For feeling self-righteous and denying guilt, for being concerned about ourselves and refusing to be compassionate,

All: **God forgive us.**

Reader 4: For the pain that we cause to those different than us, for our failure to include them,

All: **God forgive us.**

Reader 5: For the times we were too eager to be better than others,
when we are too rushed to care,
when we are too tired to bother,
when we really don't listen,
when we are too quick to act from motives other than love,

All: **God forgive us.**

Leader: God of justice and peace, you ask us to pray for all people. We offer our prayers for a violent and hurting world. We pray for an end of conflicts throughout the world. We pray that people everywhere may recognize that in failing to forgive and offer reconciliation they themselves are bound by their own hatred and prejudices. We pray for freedom for all, that they may be everything you want them to be. We pray Lord, that we may experience peace in our time.

In a special way Lord we pray for those whose names we have written on these poppies. As we offer them to you we pray for forgiveness and for the ability to forgive freely. We pray this in your Son's name. Amen.

Leader: **I invite you to place your poppies in this receptacle. As we burn them let us sing St. Francis' Peace Prayer, "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace."**

