

Prayer Service for the International Day of Peace

September 21st

BACKGROUND

The United Nations General Assembly has declared September 21st to be the International Day of Peace; it is to be observed as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence. The United Nations has invited all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, regional and non-governmental organizations and individuals to commemorate the Day in an appropriate manner, including through education and public awareness, and to cooperate 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

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.

Lord 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.

INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Leader: Spirit of wisdom,

All: guide us.

Leader: Spirit of openness,

All: Transform us.

Leader: Spirit of truth,

All: Lead us.

WATER RITE

(May be performed by any member of the group.)

We bring the world before us.

(A large, empty bowl, a jug of water, and a small bowl of salt are placed at the center of the assembled group.)

(Water is poured into the bowl from a jug.)

Let this water be a symbol both of our common baptism with all Christians and the source of life shared with all peoples everywhere.

(Small bowl of salt is held up.)

Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in our broken world.

(Some salt is poured into the water.)

Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in Iraq.

(A pinch of salt is added to the water.)

Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in Darfur.

(A pinch of salt is added to the water.)

Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in Afghanistan.

(A pinch of salt is added to the water.)

Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in Israel and Palestine.

(A pinch of salt is added to the water.)

Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

(A pinch of salt is added to the water.)

Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in Nigeria.

(A pinch of salt is added to the water.)

Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in Columbia.

(A pinch of salt is added to the water.)



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Let this salt be a symbol of the sorrow and the tears in the country of Georgia.

(A pinch of salt is added to the water.)

(Other regions of conflict may be mentioned.)

(Bowl of water and salt is held up.)

But let us not forget that salt and water can also help cleanse and heal. Let us bless ourselves with this salt water as a sign of our commitment to healing divisions between people, through our prayers, words and actions.

(Everyone is invited forward, as directed, to bless themselves.)

REFLECTION

Leader: "Peace is not merely the absence of war. Nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies. Nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called 'an enterprise of justice' (Is. 32:7). Peace results from that harmony built into human society by its divine founder, and actualized by people as they thirst after ever greater justice."

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, #78

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Leader: Let us recall in the silence of our hearts our role in causing division and brokenness:

- Do I recognize the dignity of all people?
- Do I allow God to speak to me through the lives of the impoverished and marginalized?
- Do I strive to remove barriers between people?
- Do I play my part in creating a fair and just global society?
- Do I challenge unjust systems and structures?
- Do I use the earth's resources wisely?
- Do I allow society to degrade and dehumanize people?
- Do I speak out when others are fearful, oppressed or treated unfairly?
- Do I work to influence my country's foreign and domestic policies?
- Do I work for peace not only in my community or country, but throughout the world?

PERIOD OF SILENCE (Allow about five minutes of silence so that participants will have time to reflect on the questions.)

ACT OF REPENTANCE

Leader: O God, forgive us.

We have not always acted for peace.

We have caused division and brokenness.

God, we ask for your forgiveness and healing.

Help us live out our calling as peacemakers.

Give us courage and strength to change.

All: Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: Let us say the Lord's Prayer together.

SIGN OF PEACE

Leader: And now let us offer one another a sign of peace.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: O God, on this day, the International Day of Peace, we remember that war and violence continue to maim, kill and destroy. Hundreds of thousands of human beings look at their sisters and brothers over the barrels of guns, cannons and missiles.

Help us to hear your voice that counsels forgiveness, compassion, patience and dialogue. Help us to "thirst after ever greater justice," so that we might contribute to a peaceful world. Help us to act on behalf of peace, not only today, but all of the days of our life.

All: Amen.

This prayer service is adapted from a reconciliation prayer service developed by CAFOD.

<http://www.cafod.org.uk>

