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Prayer for Int'l Nonviolence Day

by John Dear

On the Road to Peace

The United Nations has designated Oct. 2, Gandhi's birthday, as International Nonviolence Day. To help people of faith promote and mark the day, the Commission on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation for the Union of Superiors General in Rome commissioned the following prayer service. It is being translated and distributed to religious orders around the world. I want to offer it to everyone who would like to host a prayer service for nonviolence. Anyone who wishes can copy it and distribute it -- and pray with it.

Welcome/Introduction

(Leader) In the name of the God of peace, the nonviolent Jesus, and the Holy Spirit of love.

Welcome to this prayer service for International Nonviolence Day. Let's begin by taking a moment and turning to those around us and introducing ourselves?..

I invite you to take a deep breath and relax, to notice how you are feeling today, and to enter into the presence of the God of peace who loves you infinitely, unconditionally. I invite you to welcome the risen, nonviolent Jesus into our community of peace and into our hearts, and to breathe in his Holy Spirit of peace and nonviolence.

Let's take a minute in silence to give thanks for all the blessings of love and peace that we have received throughout our lives by the God of love and peace, and let's ask God to forgive us for all the ways we have rejected those blessings of love and peace, all the ways we have chosen violence instead of nonviolence, all the ways we have hurt others and supported the culture of violence and war. Let's repent

of our violence and ask for the grace to become people of Gospel nonviolence. (Silence)

Please respond, "God of Peace, have mercy on us."

Jesus, you renounced violence, loved everyone, practiced nonviolence, embodied peace, resisted injustice, and gave your life in perfect nonviolent love for humanity. God of peace, have mercy on us.

"God of peace, have mercy on us."

Jesus, you call us to renounce violence, love everyone, practice nonviolence, oppose war, dismantle nuclear weapons, resist injustice, embody peace and love our enemies, God of peace, have mercy on us.

"God of peace, have mercy on us."

Jesus, you are our Lord and Savior, our Brother and friend, our life, our hope, our peace, God of peace, have mercy on us.

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"God of peace, have mercy on us."

Opening Prayer (All Recite)

God of peace, be with us now as we repent of our violence and hear your word of peace. Help us to become your holy people of Gospel nonviolence, that we might follow the nonviolent Jesus, love one another, love our enemies, reconcile with everyone, resist injustice and pursue a new world without war, poverty, nuclear weapons, global warming or violence, your reign of nonviolence in our midst. We ask this in the name of the nonviolent Jesus, our brother and our peace.

First Reading: Isaiah 2:2-5.

Psalm Response

(Leader) Our Responsorial Psalm is from Psalm 46. Please respond: "God puts an end to wars."

"God puts an end to wars."

God is our refuge and our strength,
An ever present help when we are in trouble;
So we shall not be afraid though the earth be in turmoil,
Though mountains tumble into the depths of the sea,
and its waters roar and seethe, and the mountains quake.
The God of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob.

"God puts an end to wars."

There is a river whose streams bring joy to God's city.
It sanctifies the dwelling of the Most High.
God is in the city, it cannot fall.

At break of day, God comes to the rescue.
Nations are in an uproar, kingdoms are tumbling,
And when God raises God's voice, the earth crumbles.
The God of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob.

"God puts an end to wars."

Come, consider the wonders of the God of peace,
The astounding deeds God has done on the earth.
God puts an end to wars over the whole wide world.
God breaks the bow, God snaps the spear,
God burns the shields in the fire.

"God puts an end to wars."

"Be still and know that I am God, supreme over the nations,
Supreme over the world."
The God of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob.
"God puts an end to wars."

Second Reading: from the words of Mahatma Gandhi.

"Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of humanity. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of humanity. Nonviolence is not passivity in any shape or form. It is the most active force in the world. Nonviolence is the supreme law. Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for nonviolence. One person who can express nonviolence in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence, but I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence. My optimism rests on my belief in the infinite possibilities of the individual to develop nonviolence. The more you develop it in your own being, the more infectious it becomes till it overwhelms your surroundings and by and by might oversweep the world. We have to make truth and nonviolence not matters for mere individual practice, but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That, at any rate, is my dream. When the practice of nonviolence becomes universal, God will reign on earth as God reigns in heaven."

- [From *Mohandas Gandhi: Essential Writings*," edited by John Dear, Orbis Books, New York, 2002.]

Third Reading: Luke 6:27-36

Silent Reflection After the Readings

Intercessory Prayers for Nonviolence

(Leader) Please respond, "God of Peace, hear our prayer."

* That we might become people of Gospel nonviolence, who allow God to disarm our hearts of the violence within us, that we might be nonviolent to ourselves and to every person we meet for the rest of

our lives, we pray:

"God of Peace, hear our prayer."

* That we might practice nonviolence as Jesus did, come to understand his creative nonviolence, and obey his commandments of nonviolence: "put down our sword," "be as compassionate as God," and "love your enemies," we pray:

"God of Peace, hear our prayer."

* That we might come to know and worship God as a God of peace and nonviolence, who "makes the sun rise on the good and the bad, and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust," that we might become peacemakers who help end war and create a culture of nonviolence, and so, fulfill our vocations to be the beloved sons and daughters of the God of peace, we pray:

"God of Peace, hear our prayer."

* For the church, that it might be a global community of Gospel nonviolence, that it might never bless violence or justify war again, that it might support and bless nonviolent campaigns for justice and peace, and that it might always teach, practice and model the nonviolence of Jesus, we pray:

"God of Peace, hear our prayer."

* For an end to war, poverty, starvation, racism, sexism, executions, torture, abortion, nuclear weapons, global warming and violence of every kind, we pray:

"God of Peace, hear our prayer."

* For the coming of a new generation of peacemakers, for new teachers, prophets, apostles, champions and saints of Gospel nonviolence, who will help the world turn from violence to nonviolence, who will lead us to reject war and nuclear weapons, reconcile with one another and create new culture of peace and nonviolence, we pray:

"God of Peace, hear our prayer."

* Please add your own petitions [either in silence, or out loud, depending on the group].

(Leader) God of peace, thank you for hearing our prayers, all the prayers in our hearts and all the prayers of the whole human race, and we offer them in the name of the nonviolent Jesus. AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

(Leader) Before we recite the Lord's Prayer together, and ask for the coming of God's reign of nonviolence on earth and for God's forgiveness, let's take a moment of silence to recall everyone whoever hurt us, and let's forgive them all, so that we will be ready to ask God to forgive us "as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Silence)

All recite the Lord's prayer together out loud.

A Pledge of nonviolence

(Leader) I invite all those who are ready to recite together this pledge of nonviolence, that we will try to

practice and live the nonviolence of Jesus for the rest of our lives:

In the name of the God of peace and nonviolent Jesus,
I pledge today to live, practice and teach the nonviolence of Jesus,

- to renounce violence and to non-cooperate with the world's violence;
- to love every one as my sister and brother;
- to respond with love and not to retaliate with violence;
- to forgive those who have hurt me and reconcile with everyone;
- to accept suffering as I work for justice, rather than inflict further suffering;
- to live more simply, at one with all creation;
- to work with others for the abolition of war, poverty, nuclear weapons, global warming and all violence;
- to follow the nonviolent Jesus on the way of the cross into the new life of resurrection, knowing that my life is in God's hands, that life, love and peace are stronger than death, hatred and war;
- to seek God's reign of nonviolence for the rest of my life;
- and to promote and teach the Gospel message of nonviolence.

May the God of peace give me the grace and strength to fulfill this pledge and make me an instrument of God's peace. Amen.

Closing prayer

(Leader) Let us pray?.God of peace, thank you for calling us to follow the nonviolent Jesus on the road to peace. Help us to become your holy people of Gospel nonviolence. Disarm our hearts that we might be instruments of your disarming love. Make our church a community of Gospel nonviolence, that rejects war and radiates your love and peace. Bless us to love one another and our enemies, to reconcile with everyone, to resist injustice and spread the practice of nonviolence. Give us a new world without war, poverty, nuclear weapons, global warming or violence. Give us your reign of nonviolence, here and now. We ask this in the name of the nonviolent Jesus, our brother and our peace.

Closing blessing

(Leader) May the God of peace who loves you infinitely bless you abundantly, the Creator of peace, the Christ of peace, and the Holy Spirit of peace.

AMEN.

After a closing song of peace, all are invited to offer each other a sign of peace.

[Editor's note: Fr. John Dear will be taking an end of summer break after today. His weekly column will return on Tuesday, Sept. 8. For information on his books and speaking schedule, or to invite him to speak at your church or school, see: www.johndear.org.]

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