



Maryknoll Office  
for Global Concerns

# Lenten REFLECTION GUIDE 2026

## A JOURNEY TOWARD PEACE

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“

*This is the peace of the risen Lord — a peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering.*

”

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**POPE LEO XIV**

# About this resource

In this Lenten Reflection Guide, we offer reflections, questions, prayers, and actions based on each week's Scripture readings in light of Catholic social teaching and Maryknoll mission experience. Use this guide individually or in small groups to reflect upon your life patterns, to pray more deeply, and to renew your spirit to face the realities of our world.

Quotes are from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns online Scripture Reflection series.

## Photos

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## About us

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missioners, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missioners serve.

Washington Office  
200 New York Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
+1 (202) 832-1780

New York Office  
P.O. Box 311  
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311  
+1 (914) 941-7575

 [facebook.com/MaryknollOfficeforGlobalConcerns](https://facebook.com/MaryknollOfficeforGlobalConcerns)  
 [instagram.com/maryknollogc/](https://instagram.com/maryknollogc/)

[ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)  
[www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org)



# Ash Wednesday

*If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*

**PSALM 95:8**

**P**alm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week in the liturgical calendar for Christians around the world! On this day, we commemorate Jesus triumphantly entering into Jerusalem before his torture and death, culminating in his resurrection, which we call the Paschal Mystery, that which expresses the center of our Christian faith.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowd of people waves tree branches and shouts: “Hosanna to the Son of David. This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee.” Later in that same Gospel, the crowd shouts for Pilate to crucify Jesus and release Barabbas, a political revolutionary and insurrectionist, instead. We don’t actually know if this crowd was the same group of people or not, but this contrast certainly reflects the political polarization and dichotomy that is dividing so many families today, not only in our own country, but around the world. These divisions are exacerbated by people not being willing to enter into authentic dialogue and deeper listening with others. This is made worse by the new realities of artificial intelligence and social media, which are manipulated to produce “fake news,” such that no one really can be sure of what is “true” anymore. Such propaganda feeds people’s anger and fears, which further divide them and can lead to horrific violence and terrible wars, all of which we have so painfully witnessed in the past years. So much of what drives people’s irrational emotional reactions, whether political or otherwise, is an underlying fear of not feeling safe and secure. In my work with healing trauma, we learn that an important factor for healing is coming to find safety and serenity within oneself. How often does a parent comfort a child by saying, “Everything is going to be all right.”

In 2025, when Leo XIV was elected Pope, his first greeting was, “Peace be with all of you!” At each Mass, we

offer one another this greeting of peace. This is the same greeting that the Risen Jesus gives to his friends when he appears to them in the Upper Room, where they are hiding in fear. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you.” Jesus promises a deeper and more transformative peace. In his 2026 message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Leo invites us to cultivate an “unarmed and disarming peace,” which is humble and persevering, and a gift that comes from God’s unconditional love. Pope Leo warns that when peace is treated as something remote or abstract, violence spreads in personal, social, and political life. Furthermore, he says that “we need a disarmament of the soul. External disarmament is impossible without an interior disarmament of heart, mind, and life.” In this light, Pope Leo speaks of a “revolution of peace.” He calls on us to reject the irrationality of modern warfare and to pursue the “disarming path of diplomacy, mediation and international law.” Just as Jesus told Peter in the garden: “Put your sword back; for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.” Pope Leo criticizes the global reliance on weapons and deterrence, arguing that true peace is built on trust, justice, and dialogue rather than fear and domination. The Pope calls religions to resist the temptation to justify violence or nationalism in God’s name and instead promote solidarity and reconciliation. For Pope Leo, this “disarmament of the soul” insists that peace begins in the human heart and requires a renewal of minds and attitudes.

During this Holy Week, may our hearts, minds, and souls be transformed and renewed in the spirit of Jesus and through the inspiration of the prophetic words of Pope Leo, so that we may truly become heralds of that ancient greeting spoken by our Risen Lord and Savior: “Peace be with you!\$

- by Father Dennis Moorman, MM

### Questions for Reflection

What could "disarmament of the soul" mean in your own life? Where do you falsely cling to spiritual weapons rather than cultivating true peace?

What is one practice or habit that helps you find "safety and serenity within"?

### Readings

Jl 2:12-18 | 2 Cor 5:20-6:2 | Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

### Prayer

Today let me live in peace with my God, my dear neighbor and myself.  
Let me bring peace to my patch of Earth.  
Let me believe that world peace is possible, because with God all things are possible.  
Let me remember that HOPE is a vital gift I can give to our world.

Today I will not be part to pessimism – nor join the indifferent.

I will be full of joy, because God loves us and is with us. I will share this Joy with those who grieve. I will laugh with the children, the simple, the spontaneous. I will remember that joy is always up to me – as an individual and as a member of the community.

Today I will love my enemies – even those who perpetrate pain, terror, death – and those who show inhuman disregard for my brothers and sisters. I will disarm my own self of rage, extending my hands and help and forgiveness.

Eternal Mystery: Place your Holy Peace deep within my inner spirit. Calm feelings of uncertainty, insecurities. Give me courage to stand with the Peacemakers of history, and wisdom to know the true path. In your name, Divine Essence, I breathe a prayer of peace over the world – to create its future. Amen

### Response

Consider enrolling in Pace e Bene "Engaging Nonviolence Certification Program" to learn the fundamentals of nonviolence and develop personal and



Many of those in Brazil who came to our women's trauma center for holistic healing were able to change their situations of pain and suffering for themselves. Some of their husbands, who probably were a source of brokenness, asked to be taken to this place which had given their wives life again. Some of their sons were involved with drugs and their mothers wished to bring them for trauma healing as well. We had to make a decision about opening the trauma center to all. It came to my mind that half of the world's population is women and the other half is the offspring of women. With this in mind, we decided to change the statutes of the trauma center from only attending women to "transformed women attending the community and planet with holistic healing means.

- Sister Euphrasia Nyaki  
Maryknoll Sisters

societal peace. <http://bit.ly/3Zsn66B>

### Fast

Fast from choosing divisiveness. Consciously decide to listen with the ear of your heart, seeking true understanding before giving a response. Exercise peace in your personal relations and reflect on the experience.

# First Sunday

*The LORD God formed man out of the clay of the ground*  
**GENESIS 2:7**

**A**s Lent begins, may we renew our commitment to prayer and individual and social transformation. We listen to the cry and moans of our brothers, sisters and planet, sometimes feeling impotent to create change. I believe that today's Scripture readings speak to our context, question our attitudes, and enlighten and strengthen us in our commitment to Gospel values.

Our first reading emphasizes the origin of human beings, Adamah, a Hebrew term for earth. It offers a beautiful image of God as a potter with whom we and the earth are intimately connected. The narrative tells us that God's message is one of living in the garden earth in communion with Divine and all things. To preserve their joy, the only request of the first humans is to treat the earth with respect and to not eat fruit from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

However, the narrative tells us of temptation: "your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil." This choice to choose unbridled power, to be equal to God leads to conquest and maintenance of power that over centuries, we see leads to lies and oppression rather than God's generous providence of dignified living conditions for all people.

Today's Gospel also speaks of temptations to power. After days of fasting, Jesus was tempted by the devil to turn stone into bread. At the time, the doctors of the Law, legitimized wealth and physical well-being as divine blessings. Jesus, however, devotes his mission to the sick, suffering and most excluded in society.

The devil then tempts Jesus to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, a symbol of prestige and protection within the religious hierarchy. We know that Jesus chose another path, one of service, courage in denouncing injustice and ultimately death on the cross.

In the final temptation, the devil offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for his worship. This reveals the idolatry of power: elevating oneself or one's group to dominate people, property, and the earth. Jesus repeatedly rejects being crowned king, directing his life instead toward building a community of justice,

fraternity, and peace.

Looking at your individual and our social context, where do you see these temptations of power abuse and oppressions being played out? How can we embrace a just peace not rooted in power and fear? As Pope Leo reminds us: "We need to embrace an understanding of peace as not just the absence of weapons but a force capable of dissolving the desire for violence in others.... We need disarmament of the soul. External disarmament is impossible without an interior "disarmament of heart, mind, and life."

In my ministry with Nonviolence and Restorative Justice in Uganda, I met a remarkable young catechist and course participant, Alex. At one point, Alex shared that he would never forgive the perpetrator who killed his father during the insurgency waged by the rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda. The civil war between the notorious LRA and the Ugandan government included cruel massacres against tens of thousands of civilians, the forceful displacement of almost 2 million people and the abduction of around 66,000 child soldiers. The abuse of power and use of violence to oppress so many was shocking.

Alex was heavily burdened by a desire for revenge. He was in a conflict with his father-in-law. As a young boy, Alex witnessed his father's brutal murder by two men in the bush. Years later, he married a wonderful woman, having known only her mother. When he finally met his father-in-law, he realized this man was his father's killer. The father-in-law recognized Alex and threatened him: if he ever spoke about what he had seen, he too would be killed. His wife warned him to be careful, knowing her father was violent. Alex lived with intense resentment and desire for vengeance, believing that his anger honored his father's life. He constantly struggled with the urge to use force and power to avenge his father. Despite this, he and his wife shared a good marriage—until the day her father arrived and took his daughter and their child back to his home.

*Continued on next page*

This has been an incredibly painful process for Alex who said that the nonviolence and restorative justice course helped him to “express his fears and anger, cry out “enough” to vengeance, forgive his father-in-law and work on a plan to dialogue with him.” He has already started to implement this plan and is committed to bringing the peace he has found to his family, community, and parish. By choosing a nonviolent, dialogical path, Alex has also been able to mediate other conflicts, including one in which a neighbor attempted to kill another.

Our second reading reminds us that through one righteous act, life came to all. May we, this Lenten season, be strengthened by Alex and so many others in our Cloud of Witnesses who resisted and overcame temptations of violence and abusive power. May Jesus’ mission to defeat evil in all its manifestations give us the courage to be strong in our example and actions. May we be arduous workers for a just and nonviolent society and promote the right to a dignified life for all. §

- by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Joanne Blaney



### Questions for Reflection

What is your relationship to power structures?  
How can you use your power to work for justice?

Consider a time you forgave a transgression.  
How did that change or impact you? The relationship? The person who caused the harm?



## Readings

Gen 2:7-9; 3:1-7 | Rom 5:12-19, 17-19 | Mt 4:1-11

## Prayer

A Prayer from Apollo 8 for Universal Justice

Give us, O God, the vision which can see Your love in  
the world in spite of human failure.

Give us the faith to trust Your goodness in spite of  
our ignorance and weakness.

Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray  
with understanding hearts.

And show us what each one of us can do to set  
forward the coming of the day of universal peace.

- Frank Borman

## Response

More than 350,000 Haitians in the United States depend on Temporary Protected Status (TPS). While a federal judge has temporarily blocked the cancellation of TPS for Haitians, this protection could be appealed at any time. Learn more and take action: <https://bit.ly/4kqM9AA>

Zero Tolerance  
Power without truth mongers lies in ugly turns  
of rhetoric.  
Power without righteousness sells rights to  
the highest bidder.  
Power without conscience is a force of hateful  
cruelty.  
Power without courage hides its sins out of  
sight in cages.  
Power without tolerance is a stone cold floor  
of fear.  
Power without mercy has the face of a  
traumatized child,  
wrapped in Mylar, in a cage, on a stone cold  
floor of fear

- Sister Ann Hayden, MM  
Maryknoll Sisters

## Fast

Fast from using power unconsciously. Reflect on where you hold privilege or authority, and intentionally use it to protect, include, and uplift rather than dominate.



# Second Sunday

*Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.*

**JOHN 1:34**

Our Lenten journey is a time to take a long, loving look at why we follow Christ. With prayer, scripture and reflection time, we go into the deepest part of ourselves where we connect with God. It is in this place where we find our Why, our passion, the deep inner spark that is our indwelling of God. In that space is love, hope, and peace, the peace that Pope Leo XIV says in his World Day of Peace message "wants to dwell within us."

The readings of the Second Sunday of Lent tell of the Transfiguration. Jesus goes out to the mountain side with Peter, James and John. He is transfigured in the apostles' eyes, with Elijah and Moses. Peter wants to build a tent, but a voice comes from the clouds, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." In Timothy, we are reminded that God called us to this holy life through grace. Ours is only to embrace God's love, hope and peace that already dwell within us.

In our context today, peace and hope seem to be small glimmers in the face of hatred, violence and fear that is being waged against our immigrant brothers and sisters and anyone who stands as their neighbor. As we seek the unarmed and disarming peace that Pope Leo has presented us, we need to reflect on the peace within us and what we can learn from our own God-given agency as God's beloved.

In Kenya, I worked with my sisters and the people of Kenya to restore peace in the communities that had suffered post-election violence characterized as ethnic conflict. We gathered people in small groups to have conversations about the events that had taken place and their hopes for peace. We believe social change cannot happen without personal change. We recognized that we had in each group both victim and perpetrator. Indeed, there is a bit of both in each of us.

Pope Leo talks about a disarmament of the soul. We cannot possibly find disarming peace in the world if we do not begin with our own inner self. I was reminded of this every time we gathered in our small circles.

In one such circle, the third in a series of six with the same group, a woman who had been very reserved, expressed the deep anger she was feeling. She was angry because she and other participants were not being honest in their sharings. She recognized that nothing would change without honesty and openness. By expressing her anger, she was disarming her own heart as well as other participants. We need a safe space to express all our feelings that block our capacity to connect with each other. Once she was able to express that anger, she engaged more fully with other participants. And the space was open for others to do the same. That community in Kenya, called Molo, has not experienced such post-election violence since 2008.

Recently, I experienced intense rage when a loved one was challenged by injustice. With reflection, I realized the intensity of my rage went beyond this one incident. I had not allowed myself to feel the rage in me in response to the injustices happening around our country, against immigrants and citizens alike. I wanted only to cling to hope. Once I was able to recognize deep rage within me, I could use that energy to call for justice and make room for real hope, and the disarming peace that dwells within can be used to engage a world of injustice that needs the disarmament of life.

The scriptures remind us, as Abraham's descendants, we are made to bring blessings to the nations. We can do that by disarming our hearts and minds with as Pope Leo says, "a peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering. It comes from God who loves us all unconditionally." §

- by Sister Teresa Hougnon, MM

## Questions for Reflection

In your personal life, how do you maintain peace and hope amidst so much suffering?

When have you experienced righteous anger? How can you tell? How can you utilize that anger at injustice to bring about heaven on Earth?



## Readings

Gen 12:1-4a | 2 Tm 1:8b-10 | Mt 17:1-9

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, when you multiplied the loaves and fishes, you provided more than food for the body, you offered us the gift of yourself, the gift which satisfies every hunger and quenches every thirst! Your disciples were filled with fear and doubt, but you poured out your love and compassion on the migrant crowd, welcoming them as brothers and sisters.

Lord Jesus, today you call us to welcome the members of God's family who come to our land to escape oppression, poverty, persecution, violence, and war. Like your disciples, we too are filled with fear and doubt and even suspicion. We build barriers in our hearts and in our minds.

Lord Jesus, help us by your grace,

- To banish fear from our hearts, that we may embrace each of your children as our own brother and sister;
- To welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity, while responding to their many needs;
- To realize that you call all people to your holy mountain to learn the ways of peace and justice;
- To share of our abundance as you spread a banquet before us;
- To give witness to your love for all people, as we celebrate the many gifts they bring.

We praise you and give you thanks for the family you have called together from so many people. We see in this human family a reflection of the divine unity of the one Most Holy Trinity in whom we make our prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

*- Courtesy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

## Response

Religious communities across Minnesota and beyond have responded with grief, prayer, and

## Communion

There's no bread.  
The bakers have gone into hiding.  
The seats at the table are empty.  
The Twelve are out marching with the thousands.  
The streets are filled with a new song.  
Only Judas sits at Target Plaza, counting his silver,  
while Pontius Pilate issues a carefully-worded statement.  
Meanwhile, the centurions have quotas to fill.  
But out on the streets, there's a Communion.  
Jesus takes the city in his hands and says,  
"This is my body, broken for you."

—Rob Hardy  
Former Poet Laureate of Northfield, MN

organized resistance in the wake of increased ICE activity and the fatal shooting of community members by federal agents. Learn more and take action:

- Join with the MOGC to stand in solidarity and help advocate for humane immigration enforcement practices: <https://bit.ly/3Zp8wNg>
- Lift your voice in solidarity with the community in Minneapolis by using the Sing Ice Out songbook: <https://bit.ly/46R3cpR>

- Contemplate the deeper implications of the ongoing situation for ministry and trauma with the podcast "Catholic preaching in a traumatized Minnesota": <https://bit.ly/4kvlAdx>

## Fast

Consider abstaining from making purchases at companies that support ICE actions. Economic nonparticipation can be a powerful form of resistance and a catalyst for change. <https://boycottice.com/>



# Third Sunday

*And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts*  
**ROMANS 5:5**

**W**hat was that woman doing collecting water at noon? I have lived in Africa for decades, and everyone knows that you collect water in the early morning and early evening. It is cooler, and that is when you need it. This woman was coming in the heat of the day. Perhaps she was an outcast? Not welcome to mix with the others. Or ashamed of herself? But for whatever reason, she comes when no one is at the well. Except.... Jesus.

Jesus was a rather radical individual in those days. He did things outside the normally acceptable confines of Jewish traditions and life. Today's Gospel reading is an absolutely astounding encounter Jesus has with a Samaritan woman. In this meeting, Jesus breaks all the rules of a Jewish society that rejects those who are not part of the traditional Hebrew heritage.

Jesus is alone when meeting this woman. Jesus greets the woman. Jesus actually speaks to the woman first and asks her to provide for him. Then Jesus agrees to stay in Samaritan territory and evangelize. Lots of stuff to unpack there. One way to gauge the radical nature of these actions is that it states his followers were amazed that he was speaking with this woman. They didn't ask him any questions. Maybe they didn't want to hear the challenging answers Jesus always gave when confronted for his unexpected actions.

In Africa, where I have served for decades, there is tremendous tension between different ethnic groups. It seems they just cannot overcome the hostility they feel toward people who are from a different group. Violence, cattle raids, fighting and revenge are so common that the children grow up thinking this is normal.

As missionaries, our efforts are aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation among all peoples, ensuring the dignity of life and unity in a common cause. This is not easy

as prejudice and hatred run long and deep. Revenge is the modus operandi for many of the people in this world today. In much of my work, there are ethnic groups who seem unable to overcome the differences in their tribes. It can be frustrating, but I find solace in the way Jesus treats everyone around him. It seems to me that Jesus met people where they were and worked with their frailties and lackings.

What resonates with me in this parable is how FIRST Jesus entices this woman into conversation. THEN she slowly changes. Jesus reveals truths to her that change her life. THEN she goes off to spread the word to others. This is the way of God. We too need to overcome our fears and reach out to Jesus. Our pride prevents us from learning some harsh truths about ourselves. We are all sinners.

Are we so afraid of someone who is different? We have to "look into our hearts" like Jesus did. Do my actions have any positive impact on those around me? Do others see me and realize I am treating others just as Jesus treated the Samaritan woman?

One of my favorite passages is what we read today: "...But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."

I have witnessed people all over the world and from different faith beliefs who are better Christians than myself. They worship in spirit and truth. No matter our situation, status, color, religion, or belief, we are all one in God's eyes. We need to recognize Jesus in others. We need to worship in spirit and truth. God's will be done. §

- by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Gabe Hurrish

## Questions for Reflection

Reflect on your own life. Who are the Samaritans you encounter regularly? How can you better acknowledge their inherent dignity?

Societal norms are powerful, and Jesus regularly rejected those that were unjust. Which societal norms or expectations should you be challenging to more truly live out the Gospel?



## Readings

Ex 17:3-7 | Rom 5:1-2, 5-8 | Jn 4:5-42

## Prayer

Pope Leo's Prayer to St. Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago  
went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace,  
intercede for us before the Lord.

You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano,  
teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation  
that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war  
and misunderstanding,  
give us the courage to build bridges  
where the world raises up boundaries.

In this time afflicted by conflict and division,  
intercede for us so that we may become peacemakers:  
unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes  
from Christ.

Amen

## Response

Use NETWORK Lobby's reflection guide on *Dilexi Te*, Pope Leo's apostolic exhortation about loving and serving the poor. *Dilexi Te* is an invitation to contemplate Christ's love, that we may be inspired to become attentive to the suffering and needs of others, and to share in the work of liberation that flows from his love. <https://bit.ly/4kx2OCG>

In the Bible, peace is not only the absence of conflict, but also a restoration or completion. Both 'shalom' in Hebrew and 'eirēnē' in Greek are nouns used for 'peace'. Here, Jesus offers his life to restore the broken relationship between humans and our creator. Moreover, the selfless love ('agápē') commanded of us entails that we treat others the same way we would want to be treated, expecting nothing in return. As we live in our contemporary, broken, and polarized world, what does this Gospel message say to us?

- Maryknoll Seminarian Paschal Madukwa  
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

## Fast

When fasting we often think of "NOT doing something" for the Glory of the Lord. But we could also consider a fast as "DOING something" that we might not otherwise do. For instance as Jesus did this week, could we reach out to someone in the community where we live who is seen as a social outcast? Could we not lend a hand to someone who we have not had contact with for various reasons? We might find that our fears and revulsions were always misguided and it is a wonderful way to reaffirm the dignity of all humanity.



# Fourth Sunday

*Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness.*

**EPHESIANS 5:8-9**

**I**am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life.”

In the midst of so much heartbreak news these days, how uplifting to realize that Christ is the light of the world and we who follow him will have the light of life.

I pray that in the face of so much darkness in our society, we may have the courage of the blind man in today's Gospel reading.

The Pharisees are stymied by the blind man whom Jesus cured. “Give glory to God! For our part, we know that this man is a sinner.” The man answered, “I don’t know if he is a sinner; I only know that I was blind and now I can see.” They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He replied, “I have told you once, and you wouldn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples too?” At this, they hurled abuse at him: “You can be his disciple,” they said, “we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” The man replied, “Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes, and you don’t know where he comes from! We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but God does listen to men who are devout and do his will.”

Overwhelmed by so much human-caused oppression and suffering in our world today, can we speak as boldly to those in authority and be the ‘light of Christ’ shining with love, care and compassion?

As a volunteer at the Arrupe Refugee Center in Kamakura, Japan, I ask God to help me be a ray of God’s love and care for them as they face such an uncertain future. I believe all of us are called to be the ‘light of Christ’,

filled with the joy of knowing the paschal mystery is the way to true Life.

I pray that in the face of so much darkness in our society- we may have the courage of the blind man in today's gospel. §

- by Sister Kathleen Reilly, MM

## “Not on Everest, An Easter Poem”

The greatest adventure in all the world or the universe is when the God who abandons us returns. John of the Cross calls it “dark night” but then he talks about dawn.

No darkness, no dawn. No abandon, no encounter. No death, no resurrection.

Just as Jesus had to go through his dark night, we too have to go through our very own. Like the disciples on their way to Emmaus, there are moments when we feel lost, perhaps moments like this.

But as the mystic says, we find our way only in darkness. So, the great adventure isn’t on Mount Everest or in outer space, but in the space of your hearts.

Like the morning star, there is not much light, but the promise is great. A new day, a new life begins. Guess we all have our Everest to climb. But in all the beauty and joy of it all, when God breaks through, breaks through the darkness and returns to us, we call it resurrection. Amen

by Br. Marty Shea, MM (1930-2025)  
From Through the Tears, Insights from Mission

### Questions for Reflection

Where do you see darkness (fear, injustice, pain) in the world right now? Where do you see Christ's light?

The man says, "I only know that I was blind and now I can see." How has your faith changed the way you see the world?



## Readings

1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a | Eph 5:8-14 | Jn 9:1-41

## Prayer

### Prayer for a nonviolent heart

Recognizing the violence in our own hearts,  
yet trusting in the goodness and mercy of God,  
we ask you, O Nonviolent One,  
to help us carry out in our lives the love and example  
you gave us:

by striving for peace within ourselves and seeking to  
be peacemakers in our daily lives;  
by refusing to retaliate in the face of provocation and  
violence;  
by persevering in nonviolence of tongue and heart;  
by living conscientiously and simply so we do not  
deprive others of the means to live;  
by actively resisting evil and working nonviolently to  
abolish war and the causes of war  
from our own hearts and from the face of the earth.

O God, we trust in your sustaining love  
and believe that you will grant us your abundant  
grace  
to help us live this prayer.

Amen.

- Courtesy of Maryknoll Lay Missioners

## Response

Read Back for the Brink's faith-based resource guide on nuclear weapons: <https://bit.ly/4tBeKHI>  
Host a Film Screening - Help awaken your community to this dire threat. The powerful new film "A House of Dynamite" is renewing public awareness of the nuclear threat. Use this film screening package to help you

Night time in rural Tanzania where I served on mission is very dark. If you don't use a flashlight you may stumble upon a snake or the famed army ants that crawl up your legs and bite you all at once! But, when you have a good flashlight all is well. We are called to be light in the world and we can't hide that light from shining on others, offering them safety and comfort.

St. Paul acknowledges that it is not he who brings Good News to people but the Spirit of God alive in him. We are called like St. Paul to go out among others filled with the Spirit of God.

- Father Michael J. Snyder, M.M.  
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers

host a gathering, spark critical discussion, and connect people directly to action steps. <https://bit.ly/4s3Ayu7>

## Fast

Fast from meat or rich foods for a day each week. Practice simplicity in your diet and reflect on how restraint can open space for gratitude and solidarity with the poor. Offer your discomfort as a prayer for peace and justice, while also considering the environmental impact of meat production, contributing a large portion of greenhouse gas emissions.

# Fifth Sunday

*O my people! I will open your graves and have you rise from them.*

**EZEKIEL 37:12**

**A**sk what violence looks like in our world, and we have myriad examples. In El Salvador, structural violence and interpersonal violence are visible: structurally, the poor majority fight for basic protections against an authoritarian regime, and interpersonally, in my village, the yells of neighbors' interfamilial violence echo over the tin rooftops.

Ask what peace looks like. We know what it should look like. We often treat it as a future goal, an empyrean, elusive expectation toward which we strive.

Like Martha ("I know [my dead brother Lazarus] will rise in the resurrection on the last day"), we profess that good will triumph over evil in the distant future. We can imagine it sometimes.

Imagine Jesus then responding to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life." Here. Right now!

Jesus tells Martha that the resurrection and the life exist here, now, in the middle of mourning her brother's death. Not as a future promise on the last day. But right now. In her midst. In him.

How Martha must have felt! To imagine goodness in the midst of her brother's death would be unbearably difficult.

So it is with the peace that Christ brings.

Pope Leo invites us to see peace not as a future reality, but something we cultivate daily: "Peace is more than just a goal; it is a presence and a journey." Although Pope Paul VI famously pronounced in 1972, "If you want peace, work for justice," the invitation is also as follows: if you want peace, work for peace. Live peace. Imagine peace. Cultivate peace in actions and attitudes that are "lived, cultivated, and protected." It is a "principle that guides and defines our choices."

Working for peace is not a disavowal of a commitment to justice, but rather a reminder that justice operates within the gratuitousness of God's love and mercy. This calls us to be "houses of peace...where justice is practiced and

forgiveness is cherished."

The village where I serve in the mountains of El Salvador often models what a "house of peace" looks like. After civil war fighting razed their homes and after they dwelt for many years as refugees in Honduras, the villagers returned in 1987 to rebuild their entire village. Some families were on one side of the fighting, others on the other side, yet they banded together to construct a new life for themselves. When a death occurs in the community, everyone drops everything to attend the funeral. Even school is cancelled.

Yet it is far from perfect, our recent community meeting devolved into shouting, derailed by words weaponized [even under the guise of defending certain values]. Old wounds still run deep. After all, not everyone in the village was on the same side of the war.

However, everyone stayed the entire meeting. No villager walked out.

This is not simply an example of practicing justice, of giving people their due. This is an example of peacebuilding. It is messy. When you commit to it, you undoubtedly look foolish. "Why go to those meetings?" some villagers told me. "Nothing gets done. You'll see." But you know what? You can't be a peacemaker to some without being a joke and an embarrassment to others.

That's the thing about peace. It is disarming. It looks foolish, just like the Christ who entered into the world as an unarmed child and tells us, "Put your sword back into its sheath" (Jn 18:11; cf. Mt 26:52).

The community meeting made very little, if any, progress. But villagers keep showing up. Peacebuilding looks slow. Nonviolence looks ineffective. Peace must be remembered, sought, and chosen over and over again. Our readings tell us that evil will not have the last word. Love will win out. Thus says the LORD, "I have promised, and I will do it." (Ezekiel 37:14). §

- by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Sarah Bueter

### Questions for Reflection

How do peace and justice support and reinforce each other in your life and society?

What would living a life of peace and resurrection look like in the middle of conflict, grief, or division?

What does healthy conflict look like in the communities you're a part of?

## Readings

Ez 37:12-14 | Rom 8:8-11 | Jn 11:1-45

## Prayer

An immigrant's prayer/Oración del inmigrante  
O holy God

Heart of heaven and earth, praised be your holy name.

Your daughters and sons, from all peoples of the world, regardless of borders, praise you.

We praise you and give you thanks because you have placed in our hands the immigrant pilgrims who make the earth flourish and produce, to bring food to the table of the rich and the poor alike.

We praise you and give you thanks because you walk always with those who cross borders, in search of wellbeing, doing their part in building the world you entrusted to us.

On our way, we are mindful of your Presence in the promise to Abraham and Sarah and in the liberation of your people, Israel.

We praise you and give you thanks for your blessings on all immigrants, on those who cross all the borders in the United States.

And you, O Lady of Guadalupe, empress of the Americas, be always our protector and intercessor for reconciliation and the building of equality and peace.

Amen.

- Remigio Hernandez

Courtesy of Pax Christi USA

## Response

Watch our webinar on Venezuela: Beyond the Headlines, to learn more about the situation in Venezuela and how you can take meaningful action. <https://bit.ly/3MncWRG>



In a world that cries with signs of destruction and defeat, we are challenged to see the great reversal that is offered in the cross. Jesus "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave... he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross." But his death was not the end of the story; it's just the beginning of a story of eternal life for those who chose to embrace it. Let us go out this week and tell new stories, stories that embrace the past, but do not hold us there; stories that promise new life and invite us to create a future full of hope and life-giving possibilities.

- Kathy McNeely  
Returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner

## Fast

Do a social media detox. Studies have shown that the average daily social media usage of internet users worldwide is over 2 hours. Take a break from futile distractions like social media for a day, a week, or longer and use the time saved to quiet your mind and be open to the Spirit. Utilize this time to create God's will in the world.

# Palm Sunday

*"Hosanna to the Son of David;  
blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord;  
hosanna in the highest."*

**MATTHEW 21:9**

**I**n the coming week we will re-enact some of the most powerful moments of Jesus' journey. His entry into Jerusalem, which introduces this holy week of high drama, was a powerful public liturgy loaded with political and social significance and culminating his long and deliberate journey toward the center of religious and political power in first century Palestine.

The profound threat to an unjust status quo levied by Jesus' message and ministry and his persistent call for a welcoming discipleship community had already resulted in a plot to kill him. His approach to Jerusalem on a colt, highlighting his way as one of peace, service and nonviolence, rather than military might; his rejection of what theologian Walter Wink so many years ago called the "principalities and powers," the spirituality of the culture of violence, was unbearably threatening to civil and religious authorities.

Following the Way of the Cross in these days we will reflect on the meaning of the crucifixion. Nailed to a tree, experiencing in his own body an especially cruel form of execution, Jesus overcame the power of evil with an ultimate act of nonviolent resistance, offering forgiveness and mercy even in the face of suffering and death, rather than responding to violence with violence.

All the way to the cross, Jesus demonstrated the power of nonviolence and insisted that his followers do the same. Pope Leo XIV, in his first World Day of Peace message recalls that "... what troubled the disciples was his nonviolent response: a path that they all, Peter first among them, contested ... yet the Master asked them to follow this path to the end. The way of Jesus continues to cause unease and fear. He firmly repeats to those who would defend him by force: "Put your sword back into its sheath" (Jn18:11; cf. Mt26:52)".

Around the world, people threatened by violence and the many who act in solidarity with them are accepting this invitation to practice Gospel

nonviolence "in the midst of concrete historical, political and social circumstances," as described in the World Day of Peace message. They are praying and marching and accompanying vulnerable people and their communities in Palestine, Sudan, DR Congo, Ukraine, Myanmar, Minnesota, and more. In the United States, millions across the country have refused to cooperate with growing authoritarianism and state violence.

Nonviolence names a core value of the Gospel, in which Jesus combined an unmistakable rejection of violence with the power of love and truth. This "way of Jesus" (nonviolence) is a spirituality, a way of life, a method for change, a universal ethic, and the creative power of love in action that promotes respect for the dignity of every person and the integrity of creation. It is a constructive antidote to direct, psychological, structural, cultural, spiritual, and ecological violence. It transforms the roots of violence; is broader than pacifism; and is never passive.

The World Day of Peace message continues, throughout the world, it is to be hoped that "every community become a 'house of peace,' where one learns how to defuse hostility through dialogue, where justice is practiced and forgiveness is cherished."

In these challenging times of global violence and injustice, the Church could help every Catholic community to become a "house of peace" by integrating the spirituality and practices of Gospel nonviolence into the life and work of dioceses, parishes, schools, universities, seminaries, religious orders, organizations and Catholic ministries around the world.

In his World Day of Peace Message, Pope Leo reminds us that Jesus' disciples are "invited to live in a unique and privileged way..." What is the message of the Cross now? What does it mean to follow Jesus' way of life – a way of life that got him killed? How do we repeat his pattern of active, nonviolent, persistent, risky, creative peacemaking in our own lives in these times?" §

- by Marie Dennis, Maryknoll Affiliate

### Questions for Reflection

What would make your home, school, or parish a "house of peace"?

What elements of the status quo does Jesus's truth threaten in today's world?

How do you carry the meaning of crucifixion into your own daily life?

### Readings

Mt 21:1-11 (37) | Is 50:4-7 | Phil 2:6-11 | Mt 26:14-27:66

### Prayer

#### Prayer for the People of Venezuela

God of mercy and peace, we come before you today with hearts heavy for our brothers and sisters in Venezuela. Our hearts are with them in their hour of fear.

Lord, hear our prayer and bring your peace.

We pray for the families in Caracas and across Venezuela who were awakened by the sound of explosions. Protect the children, the elderly, and the vulnerable from the physical and emotional scars of violence. Prince of Peace, guide us toward a nonviolent path.

We pray for our leaders and the leaders of all nations. Soften hearts that seek power through force and enlighten minds to see the path of dialogue. May they remember that every life is sacred and every act of war is a failure of peace. Holy Spirit, grant them the wisdom to be peacemakers.

Loving God, grant us all the strength to be your hands and feet in a time of darkness.

Amen.

### Response

Delve into Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*. This social encyclical building a culture of peace and dialogue in order to work together to care for each other as a human family. Read MOGC's study guide: <https://bit.ly/3O8HMhK> Also, explore the encyclical within its Latin American framework and the implications present in the original Spanish: <https://bit.ly/3OA4AH5>



Something else that hasn't changed since Jesus' times are the victims of the world's injustices—those being overwhelmingly the poor people of this world. This is due to what has often been referred to as structural sin that is the result of the inequitable distribution of wealth and economic policies that keep marginalizing the poor and that drive more people into poverty. Our martyred sister Jean Donovan referred to this as the social sin of the First World.

- Steve Barrett  
Maryknoll Affiliate

### Fast

Consider adding practices into your life and communities to build "houses of peace". One way is intentionally developing your thoughts and mindset to be more Christ-like. Utilize a Lenten prayer commitment throughout your day like the following:

Morning: Lord, make me an instrument of Your love, truth, and peace today and everyday.

Midday: Order my steps, Lord, according to Your Word.

Evening Examen: How did I live out peace today? Where did I respond with love? Where do I need mercy?