



Prayer Service: International Day of Peace: A Call to be Artisans of Peace

September 21

Prayer Service Preparation

- Recruit 8 readers

Optional

- A tea candle for each participant and matches
- Table to place candles

Introduction:

Leader: In 1981, the United Nations designated September 21 as the annual date of the International Day of Peace, calling on the global community to join efforts and strengthen the ideals of peace within and among all nations. It is also a day without violence, a ceasefire day, personal and political.

In his January 2015 Message for World Day of Peace, Pope Francis offered heartfelt wishes of peace to the world's peoples and nations as he prayed "for an end to wars, conflicts and the great suffering caused by human agency and for the advancement of harmony and peace in the world" *Pope Francis's Message for World Day of Peace, 2015* (1). In his homilies, writings, and impromptu conversations with reporters, Pope Francis echoes that we neither have the right nor the freedom to remain indifferent to the lot of our brothers and sisters and that recognizing every other person as a brother or sister with God-given dignity can lead to peace.

The International Day of Peace 2015 theme is *Partnerships for Peace – Dignity for All* which aims to highlight the importance of all segments of society working together for the advancement of peace. Each of us is called to be an artisan of peace, to participate in the shared responsibility of shaping a more just and humane society. Together we must seek the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable, and explore ways to resolve conflict through nonviolence.

Call to Prayer

Reader 1: O God of Peace, we have sinned against you and the human family.
Forgive us for standing back as we witness the chaos in our world.
Forgive us for our attitudes of indifference,
as we watch the garden of humanity being consumed
by weeds of violence, war, hunger, greed and corruption.

Show us, God, how to be better artisans of peace:
To resolve conflict through dialogue,
To replace weapons of war with acts of kindness and compassion,
To respect the human rights of all peoples,
To transform fear of our neighbors with trust,
To abolish the deepening divisions between rich and poor.

O God of Peace, we hold our world in the palm of our hands,
Promising to work for a world of peace. Amen.



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Reader 2: From Pope Paul VI

“In our generation when [people] continue to be afflicted by acute hardships and anxieties arising from the ravages of war or the threat of it, the whole human family faces an hour of supreme crisis in its advance toward maturity. Moving gradually together, and everywhere more conscious already of its unity, this family cannot accomplish its task of constructing for all men everywhere a world more genuinely human unless each person devotes himself to the cause of peace with renewed vigor. Thus it happens that the Gospel message, which is in harmony with the loftier strivings and aspirations of the human race, takes on a new luster in our day as it declares that the artisans of peace are blessed ‘because they will be called the sons of God’ (Matt. 5:9),” (*Gaudium Et Spes*, 1965, 77).

All: May we, as artisans of peace, reflect on these words and respond with prayer and action.

Reader 3: From Pope John XXIII

“Consequently people are living in the grip of constant fear. They are afraid that at any moment the impending storm may break upon them with horrific violence. And they have good reasons for their fear, for there is certainly no lack of such weapons. While it is difficult to believe that anyone would dare to assume responsibility for initiating the appalling slaughter and destruction that war would bring in its wake, there is no denying that the conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance. Moreover, even though the monstrous power of modern weapons does indeed act as a deterrent, there is reason to fear that the very testing of nuclear devices for war purposes can, if continued, lead to serious danger for various forms of life on earth” (*Pacem In Terris*, 1963 111).

All: May we, as artisans of peace, reflect on these words and respond with prayer and action.

Reader 3: From Most Rev. Diarmuid Martin, Coadjutor Archbishop of Dublin

“Peace is a gift of God. Christians should be alongside their fellow citizens in marching for peace, in demonstrating for peace, in reflecting on peace. But they must also be involved in what is specifically Christian in the fight for peace: praying for peace, fasting for peace, converting towards peace.” (*Theological And Moral Perspectives On Today’s Challenge Of Peace*, November 2003).

All: May we, as artisans of peace, reflect on these words and respond with prayer and action.

Reader 4: From Pope Paul VI

“On the subject of war, quite a large number of nations have subscribed to international agreements aimed at making military activity and its consequences less inhuman. Their stipulations deal with such matters as the treatment of wounded soldiers and prisoners. Agreements of this sort must be honored. Indeed they should be improved upon so that the frightfulness of war can be better and more workably held in check. All men, especially government officials and experts in these matters, are bound to do everything they can to effect these improvements. Moreover, it seems right that laws make humane provisions for the case of those who, for reasons of conscience, refuse to bear arms, provided however, that they agree to serve the human community in some other way,” (*Gaudium Et Spes*, 1965, 79).



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Reader 5: From Pax Christi International

“On July 14, 2015, an agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme was reached in Vienna, Austria. This agreement was achieved through protracted high level political negotiations involving the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, the Russian Federation, and the European Union, as well as Iran. It aims to curb Iran’s development of nuclear weapons while allowing the country to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Pax Christi International applauds this important diplomatic accomplishment as a critical step toward nuclear non-proliferation and, ultimately, nuclear abolition.

The agreement should be welcomed as a sign of rapprochement between Iran and the West. Negotiations have effectively improved security and should bring about some improvement in the lives of hard-pressed Iranians. The deal will enable Iran to play a more active role in regional politics, increasing the possibility of a diplomatic solution to the war in Syria and leveraging political concessions in Baghdad and Damascus that could more effectively curtail the power of ISIS and avert a wider Shia-Sunni conflict. Above all, skilled diplomacy has prevented a disastrous war in response to Iran’s nuclear ambitions, a war that would have endangered the entire world.” (*Pax Christi International Statement: New perspectives and hope with Iranian agreement, July 16, 2015*).

All: May we, as artisans of peace, reflect on these words and respond with prayer and action.

Reader 6: From the Prophet Isaiah 2:3

“God will judge between the nations and render decisions for many countries. They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, one nation will not raise the sword against another, and never again train for war.” (*The Inclusive New Testament, Priests for Equality, 1994*).

All: May we, as artisans of peace, reflect on these words and respond with prayer and action.

Reader 7: From Pope Francis

“Many conflicts are taking place amid general indifference. To all those who live in lands where weapons impose terror and destruction, I assure you of my personal closeness and that of the whole Church, whose mission is to bring Christ’s love to the defenceless victims of forgotten wars through her prayers for peace, her service to the wounded, the starving, refugees, the displaced, and all those who live in fear. The Church also speaks out in order to make leaders hear the cry of pain of the suffering and to put an end to every form of hostility, abuse, and the violation of fundamental human rights.

A conversion of hearts is needed which would permit everyone to recognize in the other a brother or sister to care for, and to work together with, in building a fulfilling life for all. This is the spirit which inspires many initiatives of civil society, including religious organizations, to promote peace. I express my hope that the daily commitment of all will continue to bear fruit and that there will be an effective application in international law of the right to peace, as a fundamental human right and a necessary prerequisite for every other right. (*The Celebration Of The World Day Of Peace, January 2014, 7*).

All: May we, as artisans of peace, reflect on these words and respond with prayer and action.



Private or Communal Reflection

Leader: *Invite participants to pause for a moment of silence and reflect privately or collectively on one or more of the following questions:*

- Which reading speaks to your heart? Why? How do the words of faith leaders challenge you to work for the ideals of peace within your community, country, and among all nations?
- What can you do to promote peace and nonviolence in your homes, schools, parishes, and neighborhoods?
- What does it mean to be an artisan of peace? Who are the artisans of peace who have made a difference in your local community? Who inspires you to work for peace and nonviolence?
- How can a global day focusing on peace be a powerful force in promoting the cessation of violence and creating a more peaceful state among peoples and nations?

Closing Prayer

Optional: Before reading the Artisan of Peace Pledge, leader invites participants to light a candle when he/she hears a statement that he/she agrees to commit to put into practice for the year. As God's artisans of peace, we are called to build a society of peace, to replace practices of violence and war with values of nonviolence and peace.

Reader 8: Loving God, guide us to be your artisans of peace,
To use the talents and skills you have so generously given us
To creatively educate and advocate for others who are denied a voice.

Help us to be present to members of the global human family
And to recognize the systems and structures
That deny the dignity of the human person.

Help us to be engaged and fully focused
So we may envision and develop effective strategies
To further justice and to be your artisans of peace in our world. Amen.

Faith in Action

- **Commit** to peaceful thoughts, acts of kindness, and love throughout the day of September 21.
- Work with other faith groups in your community to have a **Peace Pilgrimage** traveling throughout your community and stopping at various houses of worship to pray for peace in the tradition of that particular faith or stop to pray at places in need of peace and nonviolence within your community.
- **Ring a Peace Bell** at the beginning and end of the day of September 21.

