



Peace Sunday 2025

**‘Forgive us our trespasses:
Grant us your peace.’**

Promoted by Pax Christi
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*The 58th World Day of Peace will be observed in England & Wales on **Sunday 19 January, 2025**,
the 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year C).*

*The readings for the Sunday Eucharist are Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 96:1-3, 7-10;
1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-12.*

Introduction to the Liturgy

Pope Francis’ World Peace Day Message for this year is rooted in the biblical tradition of the Jubilee. The Jubilee or ‘acceptable year’ was that one year in seven or one in forty-nine, of forgiveness and restoration, when all debts were forgiven, prisoners freed and a sense of community restored. However, it was more often than not a dream rather than a reality.

The Message tells us that the concepts of hope and forgiveness are at the heart of the Jubilee, a time for conversion that calls us not to condemn, but instead to bring about reconciliation and peace. We are invited to ask for forgiveness as a means of obtaining God’s peace. And, God knows, we have much to be forgiven for. The Pope informs us that it is only from a genuine conversion on all levels - personal, local and international - that true peace will be able to flourish.

In the Bible, the term ‘conversion’ appears over a thousand times and means to turn, return, bring back, restore. It is always specific, a turning away from something towards something else: from injustice to justice, from violence to peace, from darkness to light. And it is always a turning towards God. In the New Testament, it can be understood best in the context of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus. So let us turn now, and ask for forgiveness.

Lord God, creator of the universe, forgive us for the damage and destruction we have wreaked upon your beautiful world.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ our peace and joy, forgive us for our failure to work tirelessly for peace, justice and reconciliation in the world.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times when we failed to recognise your presence in our lives and tried to work without your help.

Lord, have mercy.

Introduction to the Readings

First Reading (*Isaiah 62:1-5*)

Isaiah, in the manner of the Hebrew prophets before him, promises that he will not tire of talking about Jerusalem and Zion until they are recognised for what they are: the city of peace and the land of wedding joy. This verse is a short poem about the glorious resurrection of Jerusalem, the crown of splendour in the land of Yahweh.

Psalm (*96:1-3, 7-10*)

A beautiful prayer of praise to Yahweh as King and Judge. The Psalms read like prayers - prayers of praise, petition and thanksgiving. In some ways, the Book of Psalms is the prayer book of the Bible.

Second Reading (*1 Corinthians 12:4-11*)

Each one of us has a gift or talent (and some of us are lucky to have more than one!) We are all links in the long chain of history and if that chain is to remain unbroken, we have a duty to use well whatever talents God has given us.

Gospel (*John 2:1-12*)

Towards the end of the wedding feast story, we read: 'And his disciples believed in him'. One of those disciples, very many years later, was Martin Luther King Jr, who had a dream. To realise that dream he worked at filling the empty jugs of this world with water, sure that once again HE would come to change all that water, the bitter water of this world, into wine - heavenly wine - in preparation for the final banquet to come. Let us work like him (and so many others) in the kitchens of this world, living out those timeless values of the Kingdom.

Homily Notes: Cana - the Wedding Feast that never ends

Weddings are wonderfully joyous occasions. One imagines that Jesus himself enjoyed the wedding at Cana with his family, relatives and friends - at least up until the time his mother asked him to provide a rather surprising wedding present for the happy couple and guests!

At that wedding who do you think was the most important person? Apart from Jesus, it must surely have been Mary, his mother and first disciple. When she saw her son arrive, she probably thought: maybe this is where it will all start; from here, from this feast, from this house, from this kitchen, this is where the Kingdom begins. Maybe today all is going to change and the dream of the Jubilee will start to become a reality.

But her son sat with people she had never seen before, and he took a glass and started to drink and relax like all the others. While still watching him, she heard the commotion in the kitchen with the servants saying that the wine was coming to an end and they were down to the last jug. What was to be done? Too many guests, no wine and probably no money either. And then she thought: should I try it now, should I suggest he do something?

It was as if a sign had already been given: the old was over, the new about to begin. She made up her mind and went to him and said: 'they have no wine'. He looked at her and said: 'Not yet, not yet'. But she went into the kitchen and ordered them to do what he told them. That is what they did when, after some time, he stood up, went to the kitchen and told them to fill the jugs and pots with water. They filled them and all the water had turned into wine.

Mary was right. She knew that the final banquet bringing in the Kingdom would start soon, but she did not know when. What Mary did at that wedding was to prematurely set in motion the miracle machine with no idea where it would lead. Without realising it, she had triggered the

arrival of the Kingdom. Jesus intervened in the work she had told others to do. And what a Kingdom it would be! In the gospels, Jesus has a lot to say about the Kingdom. It would be a way of life based on love, peace, justice, reconciliation and forgiveness.

In proclaiming the Kingdom, Jesus took that ancient dream of Jubilee and gave it a new definition. As became clear in the way he lived and taught, the 'acceptable year' would not just be that one rare year of forgiveness and restoration. Instead, it would be a continuous daily way of living out the values of the Jubilee.

The question arises: what has it to do with us in the here and now, and what sense can we make of the values of the Kingdom in the messy reality of our lives in our homes, places of work and the communities in which we live? In a word: everything. The values of the kingdom permeate everything we say and do about all life's issues, personal and global, everything from personal difficulties to climate change, the conflicts in the Holy Land, Ukraine, and so on.

But on a personal level, what are we to understand by this asking for forgiveness? It's fair to say that most of us find it easier to believe in God's forgiveness than in our own ability and willingness to forgive those who have hurt or offended us - to say nothing of asking them for forgiveness.

I often wonder does God do 'forgive and forget' as the phrase has it? Forgiveness, if not undertaken honestly and sincerely, can be little more than a form of what the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called 'cheap grace'. It can be all too easy to say 'Sorry' and then move on, pretending that little or nothing has really happened. I remember an old priest friend in Belfast saying that the people who were best at forgiving were those who did not forget but remembered, since they knew how much forgiveness was going to cost them. It is surely significant that the theme for this Peace Sunday suggests asking for forgiveness as a means of obtaining God's peace.

One of Jesus' many gifts to us was the gift of the community of his Kingdom where we could ask continually for God's forgiveness and thereby obtain his peace. In showing us the values of the Kingdom, Jesus did more than give us a way of life; he gave us hope and comfort. He gave meaning and dignity to human existence. We should endeavour never to lose sight of all this in the midst of the apathy, the violence and the confusion that surround us in our murderous world. For we desperately need his hope and comfort, his light in our darkness. But we should never forget that we are not on our own in this adventure we call life.

We have been promised the consolation and help of his presence in our lives, for he is never far from us. Just as he wasn't far from all those present at the wedding in Cana. He was there with them, in their midst, whether or not they recognised him. And it is the same for us. In fact, he is so close to us that we often find it difficult to appreciate his presence. And that's all we need, his presence in our lives. It's more than we need and, given our constant need for forgiveness, it's certainly more than we deserve.

Additional Resources

For additional Peace Sunday resources please see our website:

<https://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-sunday-2025/>

Prayers of the Faithful

You may wish to include one or more of the following intercessions.

Priest: It is Christ who is our peace and who calls us to follow him as peacemakers in our violent and broken world. Let us pray for ourselves and for the world in which we are his witnesses. The response to each intercession is: **Christ, be our light.**

For our own homes, our families, our parish community; that the peace of Christ will work in and through us. For the relief of those who are victims of war and violence. Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For all Christians, that we will recognise our calling as peacemakers, using our God-given talents to build a culture of peace. For the ministry of Pope Francis, that he may continue his bold proclamation of the gospel of justice, peace and reconciliation. Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For our political leaders, that they will not provoke division and hatred but pursue a shared understanding, reconciliation and healing. And for our nation, that we may lead the world in laying down arms and in working to achieve a just peace. Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For the victims of wars and conflicts throughout the world. We pray for all who are suffering in the Middle East - in Palestine, Lebanon, Israel - and also in Ukraine, Russia and Sudan, and in the many parts of the world whose wars do not appear on our television screens. Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

For ourselves, that we will not be overcome by the darkness of our times and a sense of powerlessness. We continue to ponder the message of Gabriel to Mary: for nothing is impossible to God. In this new year may we open our hearts to the love of the Word who became flesh as a vulnerable baby, and then a refugee. Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

On this Peace Sunday, we pray for all who work, locally and internationally, for peace and justice; for all who will not be silent in the face of injustice or suffering; for all who take risks for peace. We ask God's blessing today especially on the work of the international Catholic peace movement, Pax Christi. Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

Let us commend to God's mercy all who are unwell (especially.....) that they might be restored to health; and all who have died (especially.....). May they dwell for eternity in the light of God's face. Let us pray to the Lord: **Christ, be our light.**

In a moment of silence, let us place before the Lord our own hunger and thirst for peace.

Final Prayer: Pour into our hearts and into our world, O Lord, the Dove of Peace, the Spirit of dialogue and reconciliation. Hear our prayers and lead us all to the Wedding Feast of your eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**