



**The Resource for the Celebration of the Spirit of Assisi
27 October**

Interreligious Gathering

Where there is the possibility of bringing together the followers of the world's great religions, monotheistic or not, to dialogue in peace about peace, perhaps it is possible to pray together for peace. Our model in this should not be Elijah and the prophets of Baal (cf. 1 Kgs 18) but Jesus himself, who accepted the other as brother or sister, sought common ground and encouraged their faith and upright living. We offer you some hints for this type of meeting:

These suggestions for preparing a multifaith (interreligious) gathering are from the statement "Promoting Interfaith Relations: Guidelines for the parishes and agencies of the Archdiocese of Melbourne [Australia] to assist in the promotion of interfaith relations in general and especially in the preparation of interfaith gatherings". They are used here with permission. If reproduced, please acknowledge the source.

1. Initiative : While civic leaders may initiate a multifaith event, the appropriate religious leaders are responsible for its structure and content. Given this basic premise, the religious leaders will maintain due regard for the intentions of the initiators and their legitimate role. A balance needs to be maintained. Although one denomination or religious tradition should not dominate, neither may there be time in the celebration for every tradition to have a public role. The selection must be done in a spirit of wisdom and service lest the event be in fact counterproductive. These events may involve Christians from a number of denominations: indeed multifaith gatherings are preferably undertaken on an ecumenical basis.

2. Location : Any place can be used since a venue is made holy by the spiritual character of those who use it. It may sometimes be more acceptable to use a neutral location such as a hall. It may also be possible, depending on the wishes of the leaders organising the event, to use a mosque or synagogue or church or temple. It should be noted that images, whether paintings or statues, may be offensive to some participants.

3. Timing : There are very many religious festivals. In planning the gathering it is important to find a time-slot that is suitable. (It is best to agree on a date and time with the potential invitees before issuing the invitation.).

4. Language : Terms such as ‘prayer’, ‘worship’, ‘God’, ‘faith’, ‘minister’ etc. do not necessarily apply in all traditions. Preference should be given to more inclusive terms. At the same time, distinctions should not be blurred.

5. Ritual : A symbolic act or ritual can be more expressive than many words. Flame and water, flowers and bread, have a universal significance so that participants can attach their own meaning to the act and not feel constrained by any one interpretation.

6. Hospitality : The Jewish tradition requires food to be kosher; the Muslim tradition requires it to be halal. Hindus may insist on vegetarian food. Some Buddhists, in addition to dietary needs, may also have requests concerning timing of a meal. Participants vary greatly in attitude to the dietary requirements of their religion. It is best to seek advice.

7. Format : There can be many formats. However, the following listing reflects the pattern of the ‘Ceremony for Peace and Collaboration among Religions’ held in St Patrick’s Cathedral, East Melbourne, on 11 June 2000, during the Great Jubilee.

1. The participants are greeted and welcomed; and the reason for the gathering is given.
2. There may be value in indicating at some point that the statements of faith made by some do not involve the assent of all, Participants can agree to disagree while at the same time coming together in harmony and mutual respect.
3. The various religious traditions make their distinctive contribution, which may be in the form of readings from the sacred texts, poems, teachings etc.
4. Music or song from the various traditions.
5. Periods of silence may be interspersed between the various contributions, during which participants transcend expressions and arrive at their source.
6. One or other leader may give some reflections appropriate to the occasion.
7. The term ‘prayer’ does not suit every tradition. Intentions or hopes, however, may be stated and agreed upon by means of some appropriate acclamation.
8. An element of ritual, carefully chosen to reflect the purpose of the event, may be incorporated.
9. A commissioning or blessing may be appropriate, sending the participants forth to live out the values of the interfaith experience.

Ecumenical Prayer

INTRODUCTION

This prayer service is based on three converging ideas. The service links to the World Day of Peace service in Assisi through the silence. The service explores what is silence and sin. The service's setting is within the understanding of the "directions." The readings bring "orientation" and set a new identity as "ambassadors of peace and reconciliation" who break the silence in the third element of the bringing the tau, the symbol of the completion of God's will

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Mt 18:20)

"And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. "(Jn 14:13)

Christians who desire peace should need no greater encouragement than these two Scripture texts to come together in Christ's name, in Christ's presence, putting aside for a time the few things that divide them and uniting in their common desire. The following prayer (composed by Atonement Father Brian Terry) can be used in an ecumenical gathering to express that desire, that deep yearning, that urgent insistence on peace in our day.

IN THE SPIRIT OF TAU...

(Bell tolls very slowly as the seven leaders enter. The choice of seven reflects the image of the eschatological banquet when all peoples are called to be at one table in the heavenly Jerusalem. For reference, see the Catacombs of S. Callixtus and the early Christian Community frescoes. Seven was understood as the perfect number, completion.)

GATHERING IN SILENCE

Leader 1: We gather here in silence, as those who gather in Assisi pray in silence.

Our silence here ... echoes the leaders of our world who are silent and do not call and work for peace. It echoes our communities that are silent and too worried about their own well being to get involved. It echoes our hearts that are silent and have forgotten the gifts our God has bestowed upon us.

We have not been created for silence. We must remember that, coming from all directions of our world, we are gift to one another.

THANKSGIVING CALL TO WORSHIP

(Our call to worship reminds us to look upon all of our perspectives and all of our places in the world as gift. This call to worship is based on a Native American Prayer adapted by Fr. Paul Ojibway, SA)

(Incense is placed on coals before each Leader reads his or her part.)

Leader 2: To the East. Creator, we offer this gift in honor of the new day and the dawn of your light. We give thanks and honor the peoples of the East - their life and spiritual ways that teach us how to live. May we always welcome the challenges of new beginnings and find joy in walking in the growing light of this day. May we think in new ways, find new ways of healing ourselves and each other, and give thanks for the birth of this new day.

Leader 3: To the North. Creator, we offer this gift in honor of the struggles and perseverance on the wintering days. We give thanks and honor the peoples of the North - their life and spiritual ways that teach us how to live. May we always welcome the challenges of difficult and humbling times. May we find strength and purpose in you and one another, find ways to support and encourage each other when we are lost.

Leader 4: To the South. Creator, we offer this gift in honor of new growth that comes in the season of spring. We give thanks and honor the peoples of the South - their life and spiritual ways that teach us how to live. May we find renewed strength and nourishment in the unexpected abundance of life. May we receive your gifts with respect, honor and humility. May we find ways to nurture new insights, encourage new leadership, and give thanks for the gifts of each person who follows Christ.

Leader 5: To the West. Creator, we offer this gift in honor of the endings of each day, in the completion of our tasks of life. We give thanks and honor the peoples of the West - their life and spiritual ways that teach us how to live. May we never be afraid of the endings we must experience at the close of each day and in each season. May we share the wisdom we have learned as we have walked your path. May we find in the darkness the courage to search for the dawn - always watching, waiting and hoping for fullness of heart, mind and spirit.

Leader 6: To the Earth. Creator, we offer this gift to mother earth that nourishes us in all things - for the gifts of creatures that move, growing things that feed us, the elements that make life possible - light, air, fire and water. May we be thankful for giving us just enough to live with honor, respect, dignity and humility. We cannot create what you give us in each season with abundance. May we learn to be healers and just stewards of your gifts. May we let our hearts sing that we find our home in you in each generation.

Leader 7: To the Heavens. Creator, we offer this gift to you so that we may find joy in our souls as we dance among the stars and know your love, care and compassion. We seek that you welcome our prayers, from East to West, North to South, from the depths to the heights for your creation. In the center point of life may we find again the strength to be at one with one another and with the gift of your creation. May we all walk a common path home to you - in each day, in each season and in every generation.

All present read together:

Creator, from East to West, give us peace. Creator, from North to South, give us peace. Creator, from the heights to the depths, give us peace. Creator, from birth to death, give us peace. Creator, from division to reconciliation, give us peace. Creator, from doubt to hope, give us peace. Creator, from alienation to unity, give us peace. Creator, from the sacrifice of your Son and the grace of your Spirit, give us peace - now and always, forever and ever. Amen.

WORD OF GOD

Leader 1: Let the silence be broken with the Word of God ringing out in every direction so all people will hear the Good News and walk in the peace and goodness of God.

“Thus says the Lord:

With heaven my throne and earth my footstool,
what house could you build me, what place could you make for my rest?

All of this was made by my hand and all this is mine

– it is the Lord who speaks.

But my eyes are drawn to the person of humbled and contrite spirit,
who trembles at my word.”

Isaiah 66:1-2

THE GOSPELS SPEAK (All Sing an Alleluia or Gospel Acclamation. During the Alleluia, the readers of North, South, East and West come forward to proclaim the Word from all directions of the compass).

Leader 2: Matthew 12:15-21

Leader 3: Mark 9:14-29

Leader 4: Luke 6:37-42

Leader 5: John 7:37-39

REFLECTION

(A person is selected to give a brief reflection.)

RITE OF FORGIVENESS

Leader 6: My Brothers and Sisters, we pray not only for peace in our world, but that we may be instruments of the peace the world needs. We need forgiveness, however, for the times we have not followed the will of God.

Let us first remember that we must ask for forgiveness in order to be forgiven. Let us call to mind the goodness of God our Father and acknowledge our sins, so that we may receive God's merciful forgiveness. Let us now remember when we have chosen silence over listening to the Word of God, or silence over the cries of injustice of the children of God. (*Adapted from the Rite of Penance: Rite of Reconciliation*)

Leader 6: Let us pray with confidence to Christ our Atonement, He is the Good Shepherd who seeks us out when we are lost in sin, and carries us back with joy.

(*After each intention, all respond, Lord have mercy*)

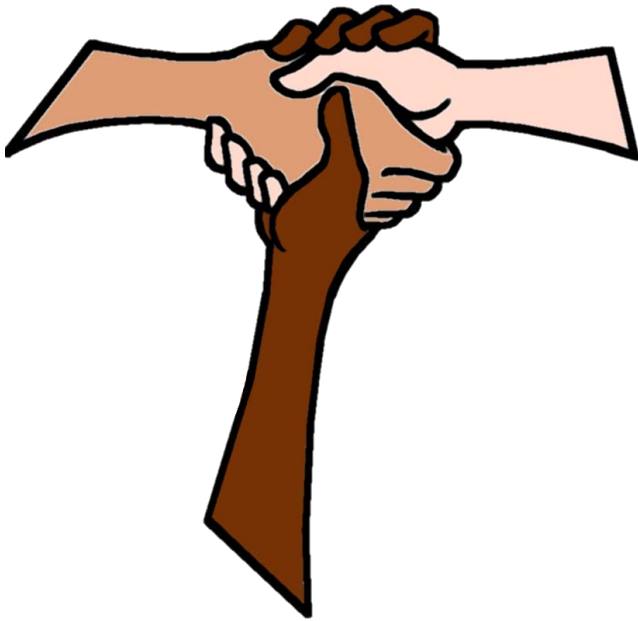
- By your death you made us one again with the Father and brought us salvation: *Lord, have mercy.*
- You died and rose and sit at the right hand of the Father where you intercede for us: *Lord, have mercy.*
- You warned us if we sin against each other we sin against you; heal us from arrogance so that we do not hurt one another: *Lord, have mercy.*
- Though you were rich you became poor for our sake; let us live more simply so that we might become rich in You: *Lord, have mercy.*
- You came into the world to save sinners; save us this day and let us bear your Good News to all: *Lord, have mercy.*
- You gave yourself up to bring redemption to all; let us give of ourselves so we might become your ambassadors of reconciliation, healing and service: *Lord, have mercy.*
- Jesus, you are the way to the Father; forgive us those times we brought scandal to your children instead of the way of peace: *Lord, have mercy.*
- You destroyed death and gave light to life; fill our hearts to overflowing with the Holy Spirit: *Lord, have mercy.*
- You died that those who believe in you might not perish but have eternal life; let us die to our indifference, selfishness, bitterness and cruelty: *Lord, have mercy.*
- You have power on earth to forgive sins; let us feel the graveness of our sins so we may know the greatness of your love: *Lord, have mercy.*
- You will come to judge the living and the dead; when you come, may you find us in faithful service: *Lord, have mercy.*

Leader 6 : Let us ask our Father to forgive our sins and to bring us to forgive those who sin against us. Let us live in the Spirit of Unity.

All:

Most High, Glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord that I may carry out Your holy and true command. Amen. (*St. Francis' Prayer for Discernment*)

RITE OF MISSION



The “tau” has been present as a symbol for a long time. Its presence can be seen in Mediterranean culture in many places. For both the Phoenician and Hebrew language, the tau is the last letter of the alphabet and became a symbol of completion. In the Hebrew language, the tau is a “t” or shaped letter. And, since the “tau” is the first letter of the “Torah,” the law that brings salvation, it became an easy abbreviation to represent law and salvation. For the Greek alphabet, the “tau” is the nineteenth letter with a cruciform shape and also was seen as a sign of life or resurrection; it was often combined with the eighth letter “theta,” with represents death, to speak of the cycle of human life. The prophet Ezekiel had a vision

where those who were faithful were to be sealed with the sign of the tau, the sign of the covenant, faith, salvation (see Ez 9:4).

In the early Church, the tau was seen as a way of representing the fulfillment, the completion of the will of God in the sending of his Son, Jesus. As a symbol, the tau became associated with the third century Egyptian hermit, St. Anthony, who is considered to be the father of monasticism.

St. Anthony is often pictured carrying a tau or with a tau on his clothing.

But St. Francis of Assisi is the saint noted for spreading the tau throughout the world. It is believed that Francis was in Rome, perhaps at the Fourth Lateran Council, and heard Pope Innocent III speak on Ezekiel and the meaning of the tau. Francis immediately appropriated the symbol as his own. The themes of conversion, salvation, faithfulness to the Word and will of God seemed to be what Francis saw as important. The tau became the cross of Jesus Christ and became a sign of forgiveness and peace. It is believed that St. Francis based his very habit on the shape of the tau to embrace the cross as life, forgiveness and salvation. Each friar was to put on the habit each day and was to become a walking tau, a walking crucifixion to remind the world of God’s love and forgiveness. It was through the preaching of the Word that Franciscans spread the tau throughout the Christian world as a symbol to daily renew our baptismal call to “put on Christ” and believe in the Good News. And perhaps because of the itinerant preaching of the Word of God, the tau also became a “milestone,” a marker to follow!

As we come together today to pray for peace, the tau calls us to remember the convergence of the meaning of conversion, completion and living in the Spirit of God’s forgiveness and peace. We need to be the ones who are and set milestones, who call out for faithfulness to God’s Covenant.

SENDING IN THE SPIRIT OF TAU

Leader 4: Blessed are the peacemakers, since they shall be called sons and daughters of God (Mt. 5:9). Those are true peacemakers who, in spite of all they suffer in this age, preserve peace in soul

and body for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. (From the Admonitions of St. Francis, number 15, "On peace")

Leader 3: Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all. (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Leader 2: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and prayers. (Acts 2:42--Theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2011)

Leader 1: He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation..." (Mark 16:15)

(All seven leaders go and distribute a tau to each person as all sing the sending song)

SENDING SONG

Catholic Eucharist to celebrate Spirit of Assisi

Whenever Catholics, those in full communion with the Bishop of Rome, gather together to pray, we naturally turn to the Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Mass, to express our fervent longing and insistent plea. We suggest that those who would like to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Day of Prayer for Peace, convoked by Pope John Paul II in October 1986, with a Eucharist, use the Votive Mass for Peace. The Missal offers various prayers and the Lectionary various readings for such a Mass. Below are some suggestions that might be used for the Mass:

Appropriate songs should be chosen from the liturgical context of each locality.

Opening Prayer: O God, you who call your children peacemakers, help us to work without tiring for that justice without which authentic and lasting peace cannot be guaranteed. As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Day of Prayer for Peace, convoked by Pope John Paul II, send your Spirit upon us so that we might promote evermore faithfully the values of your Kingdom: peace, justice, mercy, forgiveness, truth and love. Extend to all men and women, and to all creatures, your loving concern. Help us to form a true family, united in harmony and peace. We ask this....

Suggestions for a Prayer of the Faithful:

Prayer I:

Celebrant: Brothers and sisters, let us prayer to God, who through the Gospel of his Son Jesus, has given us salvation and peace.

Our response is: Hear us, O God

- For the holy Church of God, for Benedict our Pope, for our Ministers General, and for the General Superiors of the Franciscan family, that based on the Gospel they might announce Peace and Good to all. Let us pray together.
- For those who direct nations and for the leaders of world religions, that the Spirit of Assisi might be a constant call to find paths that will unite the peoples of the earth, and that they search for dialogue and work to put an end to all violence. Let us pray together.
- For those who have found in the Gospel of Jesus the path to generous self-giving for others, that all of their efforts strike a chord in others and that they might live in the freedom of the daughters and sons of God. Let us pray together.
- For all Christian communities that suffer persecution due to ideology, intolerance or fanaticism, that they might find full peace and religious liberty. Let us pray together.
- For all those of the Franciscan family that, like Saint Francis, they may make the Gospel into a salvific event and know how to share with others the Good News of God the Father and of Jesus. Let us pray together.

Celebrant: O God, hear the prayers that we ask you in faith. Give all Christians and all men and women the gift of unity and peace. Through Christ our Lord.

Prayer II:

Response: Lord make us instruments of peace.

- You have created the heavens and the earth, and all that they contain. You have formed men and women from this precious earth, infusing them with your Spirit. You have done all this with goodness and love. But humankind often distances itself from you, and shows preference for war over peace, for vendetta over pardon, for hate over love. Help us to respect the project of your creation. We pray.
- Your prophets announce that days are coming when the wolf will live with the lamb and no one will act wickedly. In many places around the world we hear the sounds of weapons. Forgotten conflicts, which nonetheless bring death, strike at defenseless populations, between the indifference of public opinion and the disinterest of the powerful. Help us to hear the cry of pain that comes from so many people of the earth. We pray.
- Your Son has taught us love, pardon and respect for the life of every person. We reflect painfully on the lives destroyed by terrorist attacks and in war zones. We entrust to you their souls and their families. We pray.
- The risen Christ has given us the gift of his peace. That the dignity of all people tormented by war be respected, so they might once again raise themselves up and embrace their children, joyful in the knowledge that the day of liberation is a bit closer. We entrust to you their hopes and their waiting. We pray.
- You desire that we replace the instruments of war with opportunities of growth and development. Be close to those who are responsible for Nations, that they might be touched by the pain of humanity and provide thought, effort and resources to promote life and progress. Bless and sustain those who carry in their heart a concern for the good. We pray.
- O God, obedient to your will, Jesus died while forgiving those who killed him. Only you, O God, can open hearts to the possibility of giving without measure, to impossible forgiveness, to uncomfortable solidarity, to a peace which kisses justice, to dialogue and to respect between religions. Help each one of us to be open to your grace. We pray.

Presentation of Gifts: Along with the bread and wine, consider presenting objects that represent our efforts to promote dialogue and peace in our world.



Prayer over the gifts: O God, remember Jesus who is peace itself and who has washed away our hatred with his blood. Because you love all men and women, look with mercy on us. As we celebrate the memory of the Spirit of Assisi, banish the violence and evil within us, and by this offering restore tranquility and peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Prayer after Communion: O God, you satisfy our hunger with the one bread that gives strength to humankind. Help us to overcome all that divides us, and in the Spirit of Assisi help us to promote that peace which is the farewell gift of Jesus to all of us. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Use the Blessing of Francis for the final blessing.

Franciscan Prayer

Brothers and sisters of Francis of Assisi have for centuries turned to his life to show us how to act in different circumstances. We know that he rejected war but went off on the Crusades and was so disgusted by the actions of both the Christian armies and their opponents, that he set out to try to heal the divisions. Granted, he thought he was going to convert the Sultan or win martyrdom, and history shows that never happened. What did happen, however, was the meeting of two great minds and two enormous hearts who recognized in each other a man of conviction, but most of all an upright person, one who acted out his “credo” in his life.

We propose this prayer (prepared by Bernd Beermann OFM Cap) and the dialogue between St. Francis and the Sultan (prepared by Kathy Warren, OSF and John Petrekovic, OFM Cap) for a gathering of the Franciscan family or the many people who admire Francis of Assisi and see in him a model for our action in times of strife and division.

Symbol:

As we say this opening prayer we light a candle for peace in our world. Each person will light a candle from the Peace Candle and place it in the bowl so that the collective light will shine in our hearts and in the world of darkness to bring the Gift of PEACE.

Prayer while lighting the candles:

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed, kindle in the hearts of all of us the true love of peace, and guide with Your pure and peaceable wisdom those who make decisions for the nations of the earth; that in tranquility Your kingdom may go forward, until the earth be filled with the knowledge of Your love through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn: LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be

With God as our Father neighbors all are we
Let me walk with my neighbor in perfect harmony
Let peace begin with me - let this be the moment now;
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be

1st Psalm:

Psalm 122

I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”
Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.
That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the LORD—
to praise the name of the LORD

according to the statute given to Israel.
There stand the thrones for judgment,

the thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”
For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”
For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your prosperity.

Canticle:

Prayer of praises [St. Francis]

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was and who is to come.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.
Worthy are You, O Lord, our God, to receive praise, glory and honor, and benediction.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.
The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength
and honor and benediction.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.
Let us bless the Father and the Son with the Holy Ghost.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.
All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.
Give praise to God all ye His servants and you that fear Him, little and great.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.
Let the heavens and the earth praise Him, the Glorious, and every creature which is in
heaven and on earth and under the earth, in the seas and all that are in them.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever.

Prayer.

Almighty, most holy, most high, and supreme God, highest good, all good, wholly good,
who alone is good. To You we render all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honor, all blessing,
and we shall always refer all good to You. Amen.

2nd Psalm:

Psalm 147

Praise the LORD.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars
and calls them each by name.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
his understanding has no limit.

The LORD sustains the humble
but casts the wicked to the ground.

Sing to the LORD with grateful praise;
make music to our God on the harp.

He covers the sky with clouds;
he supplies the earth with rain
and makes grass grow on the hills.

He provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they call.

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;
the LORD delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Extol the LORD, Jerusalem;
praise your God, Zion.

He strengthens the bars of your gates
and blesses your people within you.

He grants peace to your borders
and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

He sends his command to the earth;
his word runs swiftly.

He spreads the snow like wool
and scatters the frost like ashes.

He hurls down his hail like pebbles.

Who can withstand his icy blast?

He sends his word and melts them;
he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.

He has revealed his word to Jacob,
his laws and decrees to Israel.

He has done this for no other nation;

they do not know his laws.

Praise the LORD.

Reading: (Romans 12, 17-21)

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Silence

Antiphon:

He has brought down rulers from their thrones

but has lifted up the humble.

Magnificat

Intercessions:

Invitation to free intercessions

Our Father

Concluding Prayer:

Lord, God of peace, who has created humankind, the object of your kindness, to be close to you in glory, we bless you and we thank you because you have sent us your beloved son, Jesus, making him the mystery of the Pasch, the architect of all salvation, the source of all peace,



the bond of true brotherhood.

We thank you for the desire, the efforts,
the realizations which your spirit of peace
has roused in our day: to replace hatred with love,
diffidence with understanding,
unconcern with care. Open yet more our hearts to the needs
of all our brothers and sisters,
so that we may be better able to build a true peace.

Remember, Father of mercy,
all who are in pain,
who suffer and die in the cause of a more brotherly world.
For people (the men) of every race, of every tongue - may your kingdom come:
your kingdom of justice, of peace, of love;
and may the earth be filled with your glory.
Amen. (Pope Paul VI)

Suggestion:

Parts of this prayer can be used as opening, closing or accompanying prayer to the dialogue of St. Francis and the Sultan.

A REMARKABLE ENCOUNTER: FRANCIS' DIALOGUE WITH THE SULTAN

The following could be part of a reflection based on the story of Francis' encounter with Sultan Malek el-Kamil in Damietta, 1219. (Cf 1C 20:57, 2C 30, LMj 9:5-9, LMj 11:3.) Other related sources include Chapters 16 and Chapter 22:1-4 of the Earlier Rule. The latter is sometimes referred to as Francis' Testament of 1219, written prior to his departure for the Levant. It contains Francis' vision of unconditional love towards all people – even those deemed the “enemy.” (For the following dialogue, Francis and the Sultan are standing at two podiums, reading their remarks. The language is meant to be natural and not “stilted” or “formalized.”)

Sultan: I am a bit surprised you made it through the front lines to reach me, holy man.

Francis: I am a bit surprised to see you myself, Sultan, sir – I thought I was certain to suffer the martyrs' fate.

Sultan: I assure you it was not out of the question.

Francis: And Martyrdom comes at such a great cost!

Sultan: Unfortunately, both of us have long traditions of martyrs. I have learned that martyrdom is never a virtue in itself, however.

Francis: Indeed. My brothers have been trying to convince you and your people for over five years now to give up your resistance and give in to the faith of Jesus Christ. In Morocco, over 3 years ago, some paid the price.

Sultan: From what I hear, they were awfully insistent about converting the Moroccans. They roused up the people who readily facilitated the martyrdom they sought.

Francis: Right – that's the point. Martyrs seldom get the leisure of having a long, heartfelt chat with their adversaries. If they spoke to one another and learned to respect one another, maybe martyrdom would be as archaic as building pyramids.

Sultan: So you have come to chat?

Francis: I don't see any other way to reach understanding, do you?

Sultan: But aside from trying to convert each other to the true Faith, what do we have to talk about?

Francis: The story of your Wisdom precedes you. You studied among us, you are friends with our emperor, you have a thirst for knowledge and truth. I know that you have so much I can learn.

Sultan: So you have come to learn and not to teach?

Francis: Is there anywhere a better teacher than the one who knows how to learn?

Sultan: For a little man, you yourself have some experience of wisdom!

Francis: I am not sure of that. Just walking in here, I had a thousand questions: why your soldiers were so courteous to me, why you were letting me pass each check point, why they all paused for prayer in the middle of our journey to your camp, why they had these beads in their hands, why they bowed to me with reverence, why their faith seemed so genuine
.....

Sultan: Yes, yes, I understand: you have a lot of questions.

Francis: That is pretty much what I am bringing. A person without questions is a person with his eyes shut, it seems to me.

Sultan: I always thought, on the contrary, that you Christians had all the answers, though of course, I know that you hardly have a lock on self-righteous fanatics!

Francis: I dare say that your response shows signs of humility – a virtue for which I’m quite fond. Why DO we create such simple answers to such complicated questions?

Sultan: Both of us are fighting to defend our holy lands from desecration. The problem is that you believe we are desecrating them now, and we are repulsed by the thought that you may win them over and desecrate them all the more! The battle goes on! Theoretically, given sufficient resources of money and hate, we could continue this battle, killing one ungodly pagan after another (depending who the pagans are, of course) until we have no one left except you and I standing here. At that point, who would win?

Francis: What profit is there in winning?

Sultan: If I win, then I will be sure that Allah is praised and that all people will worship him alone.

Francis: Obviously then, you do not want peace – only victory.

Sultan: And what is the difference? If we can call an end to this ghastly fratricide – because that’s what it is, you know? – if we can stop this senseless slaughter, we will finally have peace.

Francis: But Sultan, sir, you can’t in your right mind believe that peace is as simple as victory – as though there will be a time when there would be no more conflict? Your “victory” will bring only hatred and continued attempts at revenge - not peace. You know already that neither victory NOR peace happen when one side supposedly “wins.”

Sultan: I am up against a bigger enemy than I had imagined!

Francis: You are up against only a brother.

Sultan: If only! If only we could act from the knowledge of being from the same Creator! If only we could see one another through the eyes of the Great and Holy One.

Francis: Now you are beginning to speak sense. You have finally stopped talking about winning games and decided to talk about reality.

Sultan: Reality? The blood I see every day is real. It pours out of the sons and the husbands and the uncles of real men. Even if their thoughts before death had been of anger or hatred or justice to the forces of hate, I can assure you that their final thoughts were none of those. As life slipped by, they must surely have said, “At what cost?” Reality is a word that is forbidden on the battle field. If we thought of reality, we would not be greeting one another in these trenches from hell. We would all be headed home to the ones we love in the safety we cherish.

Francis: A safety that is only precarious and deceptive, if you don’t mind me saying, Sultan. A safety for what? From what? For how long? If we are not at peace with our God and do not know the wisdom of love for our neighbor – all neighbors -- we will never have the security that comes only from loving them both – God and neighbor. Oddly, I have found that security comes only when I am NOT secure -- when I live and serve the other through what the other wishes and desires of me.

Sultan: There is something profound in that altruism! When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?

Francis: I do see, at least, that you and I have a common goal: to keep God OUT of this ghastly war fought in the Almighty’s Name!

Sultan: Why do we glorify the games we play by claiming some divine warrant?

Francis: At least now we are talking about real peace . . .

Sultan: and real victory.

Francis: Can anyone win if our God loses?

Sultan: And can Allah ever claim a victory when his sons and daughters are slaughtered in agony?

Francis: See! So you have questions too! If only our world had the courage to live its questions. I know that you recognize my Lord and Master as a great Prophet, and I know that you can appreciate his holy Word to us – unless we die to ourselves to live for God and our neighbor, unless a seed fall to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat – doomed to be stuck in the ground.

Sultan: And if it dies, it is really born – to a life above ground.

Francis: Yes. Love didn't die on the cross – it simply chose not to fight – and gave birth to a love that would never die.

Sultan: A real and eternal love – the love of the Creator, holding precious every precious particle of what the Creator envisions.

Francis: Speaking of what the Creator envisions, is it not all summed up in one word, one reality: PEACE – one of the names of God?

Sultan: Indeed! It is indeed, and our dialogue helps me believe that peace can be possible. For that I praise Allah!

Francis: Yes! Our conversation raises many more glorious questions in me about God's Goodness – beyond limits I had never thought possible! I so desire to search for answers. Questions always lead me to places I've never been – and to people as precious as you.

Sultan: Few are the men from whom I can hear those words and trust their sincerity.

Francis: Sultan, I am a poor man. I have nothing to offer you except my honesty.

Sultan: Then, I thank you in all humility. Had I not allowed you into the camp tonight, I'd never have realized how precious a Christian can be.

Francis: Who knows what we can discover when we let ourselves explore?

Sultan: And what is exploring except the voyage we can all make as we enter into the mystery of Allah – always more than we think possible and always less than we presume.

Francis: Yes! There is so much mystery and majesty in our Good God! Praise comes so easily to the lips of those who recognize both the complexity and the simplicity of God.

Sultan: Indeed! Together let us praise – and explore – our Good & Merciful God, shall we?

Together Francis and the Sultan pray:

You are the One God who does wonderful things.

You are love, charity; You are wisdom, humility, You are patience, You are beauty, You are meekness, You are security, You are rest.

You who are The Benevolent, The Just, the Mild. You who are The Infinitely good, The Merciful, The All-Forgiving. You who are the Nourisher, the Generous, the Loving-kind. All praise is Yours, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate One.

You are gladness and joy and our hope. You are justice, moderation, and all our riches to sufficiency. You are the protector, You are our custodian and defender.

You who are The Truth, The Strong, The Praised. You who are The Life-Giver, The Restorer, The Living. You who are The Magnificent, The Eternal, All-Powerful, and

Holy.

All praise is Yours, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate One.

You are strength, refreshment, You are our hope, You are our faith, our charity, You are all our sweetness, You are our eternal life.

You who are The Guardian, The Faithful, The Protector. You who are the Light, the Guide, the all-Seeing. You are Good, all Good, the Highest God: Great and wonderful God, almighty God.

All praise is Yours, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate One.

Intercessions for Morning and Evening Prayer

based on the Assisi Decalogue 24.01.2002

October for Peace 1986-2016

SUNDAY

Morning:

Violence and terrorism being incompatible expressions of the authentic spirit of religion;

- may we be committed to educating for justice and peace.

Evening:

To bring about a peaceful co-existence between peoples of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions;

- may we maintain a dialogue of mutual respect and esteem.

MONDAY

Morning:

Since a culture of dialogue is essential to authentic peace;

- may we work toward understanding and mutual trust among peoples.

Evening:

Refusing to consider our differences as insurmountable barriers;

- may we seek to encounter diversity as an opportunity for mutual understanding.

TUESDAY

Morning:

As people who believe that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God;

- let us respect the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity.

Evening:

In working together to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence;

- may we work together for justice, in order to achieve a genuine and lasting peace.

WEDNESDAY

Morning:

As part of the Gospel preferential option for the poor and vulnerable;

- let us seek to speak out for those who have no voice, and work to change their situations.

Evening:

In the desire to offer men and women of our time, a genuine hope of justice and peace;

- let us refuse to justify violence and evil.

THURSDAY

Morning:

Trust in technological progress alone, can expose the world to a growing risk of destruction and death;

- let us commit ourselves to solidarity and understanding among peoples.

Evening:

To achieve a world of solidarity and peace built on justice;

- let us take every opportunity to encourage leaders in government, religion, and business to establish just policies.

FRIDAY

Morning:

The *Spirit of Assisi* calls every person to seek truth, justice, liberty, and love;

- may every human person enjoy their inalienable rights, and every nation, peace.

Evening:

With the desire for the common search for authentic peace in the hearts of the whole human family;

- let us continue to dialogue with those of different religious confessions.

SATURDAY

Morning:

Persuaded that hatred destroys, and love builds;

- let us choose love over hatred.

Evening:

Committed to faithful dialogue, forgiveness, and mutual harmony;

- let us enliven the God of love and peace, in our world today.



General office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation



Franciscans Friars
General Curia - OFM

pax@ofm.org