

## **Prayer for the Beginning of the 40-Day Fast for Gospel Nonviolence July 1, 2025**

### **Introduction**

Jesus and the early church stated clearly that violence is not the Christian way, that violence is not the Apostolic way, that violence is not the way of God. Yet, since the Third Century, most Christians have not proclaimed this message. Today, wars rage between Ukraine and Russia, in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Myanmar. Israel has all but destroyed Gaza and is extending its assault into the Occupied West Bank. It is also attacking Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and now Iran all under the guise of self-defense, and all with the financial, military, and support of the U.S. at the U.N. In addition, tensions between the U.S. and China persist. In short, on-going wars and violent conflicts across the globe are epidemic, and the U.S. has its hand in many, if not most, of them. While claiming no money for universal health care, living wages, affordable housing, free higher education, and other life-sustaining needs, the U.S. is pouring billions into provoking, supplying, and engaging in military exercises. Gun rights surpass human rights for those who make the laws and those who oppose even modest gun control. The environment is subject to attack, along with anyone who looks different, sounds different, believes different, or lives different from the mainstream. The list could go on and on. In addition, our media, entertainment, and language are filled with violence; and our country would rather retain the capability to annihilate millions of years of evolution and thousands of years of history with nuclear weapons than sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

It is because of this tragic and shameful reality that this 40-Day Fast is being undertaken. It is a call to the individual Christian--and nonChristians in solidarity with us--to repent and return to the truth that violence is not the way to resolve our conflicts.

The fast begins on July 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on August 9<sup>th</sup>, a very somber anniversary. On August 9<sup>th</sup>, St. St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) was killed at Auschwitz, Blessed Franz Jaegerstaetter was beheaded for refusing to serve in Hitler's army, and the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, the largest and oldest Christian community in Japan, killing 140,000 people and destroying the city.

This fast for nonviolence begins in prayer, because we know that prayer and fasting are fundamental forces for good in all faith traditions. Rev. Jim Wallace tells us:

Prayer is necessary. Without it we see only our point of view, our own righteousness, and ignore the perspective of our enemies. Prayer breaks down those distinctions. To do violence to others, you must make them enemies. Prayer, on the other hand, makes enemies into friends. When we have brought our enemies into our hearts in prayer, it becomes most difficult to maintain the hostility necessary for violence. In bringing them close to us, prayer serves to protect our enemies. Thus prayer undermines the propaganda and policies of governments designed to make us hate and fear our enemies. By softening our hearts toward our adversaries, prayer can become treasonous. Fervent prayer for our enemies is a great obstacle to war and the feelings that lead to it.

And so we pray.

**Opening Prayer for Vocations to Peacemaking** by Tom Cordaro in *The Fire of Peace: A Prayer Book* by Pax Christi USA

Dear God, the harvest is plenty and the laborers are few. Your people long for peace, they thirst for justice. Send into our midst women and men whose hearts can embrace the entire world. Send into our midst young and old whose arms can lift up the lowly and oppressed. Send into our midst rich and poor who will walk with the powerless as they struggle for justice. Send into our midst people of all colors who can see a brother or sister in the eyes of a stranger. Send us peacemakers, O God, send us your peace. Amen.

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**A Reading from Hebrews 12:14-15**

Strive for peace with all people and for that holiness without which no one can see God. See to it that no one falls away from the grace of God, that no bitter root springs up through which many may become defiled

**Psalm 72:3-7, 12-14**

O God, may the mountains echo peace and the hills justice. May your anointed defend the poor and save the children of the needy. May peace endure like the sun and the moon from age to age and descend like rain on the meadow, like showers watering the earth.

Justice shall flourish in those days, a profound peace from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth until moon shines no more.

When the poor cry, they will be saved. From oppression they will be rescued, for precious are their lives. From extortion and violence they will be redeemed.

**A Reading from the Address of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV to The Movements and Associations of the “Arena of Peace” (Verona), Friday, 30 May 2025**

The path to peace demands hearts and minds trained in concern for others and capable of perceiving the common good in today’s world. For the road to peace involves everyone and leads to the fostering of right relationships between all living beings. As John Paul II pointed out, peace is an indivisible good; it is either everyone’s or no one’s. It can truly be attained and enjoyed as a reality of life and integral development only if there exists in people’s consciences “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good”

**Prayer from Pax Christi International**

Loving God, instill in us a nonviolent heart, that we in turn may be disciples of nonviolence, building peace, reconciling conflict, healing our common home, preaching Your inclusive love for every person in every place.

May your Spirit grant us the courage, the wisdom, and the fortitude to be witnesses of Gospel nonviolence in each place we find ourselves, with every person we encounter. Amen.

**A Reflection** by Marie Dennis from “Bridges of Gospel Nonviolence: The Way of the Cross”

... all the way to the cross, Jesus demonstrated the power of nonviolence and insisted that his followers do the same. When his disciples moved to defend him with the sword as he faced his betrayer and arrest, he said, according to Luke, “No more of this!” and according to Matthew, “Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” In a world overwhelmed by violence, we are invited to follow in his footsteps: “... love your enemies, do good to those who hate you” (Luke 6:27).

Active nonviolence is a positive and powerful force for social change, a bridge to just peace; a process for ending violence without lethal force; for transforming conflict; and for protecting the vulnerable. People throughout the world have used active nonviolence to end injustice and foster reconciliation, to resist war and build peace, to safeguard the infinite worth of the human person, and to care for creation.

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?

**Move Us to Action** by Terry Oakley in *Just One Year: A Global Treasury of Prayer and Worship*

Move us to action, loving God,  
So that we don’t avoid the pain of the world by escapism,  
But engage in work for justice and peace.

Move us to action, compassionate God,  
So that we do not only care for ourselves and our own,  
But care for all those in need, friends and strangers alike.

Move us to action, healing God,  
So that we do not aim simply for our own health,  
But share our resources with all who are ailing

Move us to action, friendly God,  
So that we do not exclude those different from us,  
But welcome with generous hospitality those in need.

Move us to action, wonderful God,  
So that we do not lie lukewarm in apathy,  
But give ourselves in courage and daring for your cause.

In the power and grace of the Spirit of Christ,  
We offer ourselves and our prayers  
For you to make us your wonder. Amen.

**Statement of Commitment** for all who are fasting in whatever way works for you:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner. I accept the call to repent and to return to the truth that violence is not the Christian way, that violence is not the way of Jesus. As a response to that call, I will join my sisters and brothers in fasting on \_\_\_\_\_. (Please fill in when you will be fasting and be sure to send that information to [nypaxchristi@gmail.com](mailto:nypaxchristi@gmail.com). Thank you.)

**Final Notes:**

There are many opportunities to commemorate the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in 1945 and to call for an end to all nuclear weapons. Just three happening in New York City are below. Keep an eye on the Events page of Pax Christi New York State for updates; go to [www.paxchristinys.org](http://www.paxchristinys.org). In addition, there will be a **Prayer for the Ending of the 40-Day Fast for Gospel Nonviolence** on August 9<sup>th</sup>, available like this one via e-mail.

- 1) On Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, we'll be joining the Manhattan Project for a Nuclear-Free World outside the Japanese Consulate, 299 Park Ave, at noon.
- 2) On Friday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, Pax Christi New York State and Pax Christi Metro New York will host a webinar on Zoom at 7 PM. Stay tuned for more details.
- 3) On Saturday, August 9<sup>th</sup>, our colleagues at War Resisters League will host its Memorial in Tompkins Square Park from noon to 5 PM.

