Prayer for Peace in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt
Sunday, 29 March 2015

Note: this service need not be used in its entirety. Please adapt and substitute it to answer your situation or congregation, including the scripture readings.

Commemoration of the Lord’s entry to Jerusalem

(The commemoration of Jesus entering Jerusalem and the procession of the palms can be done according to the tradition of your church. During the commemoration, Mark 11:1-11 can be read.)

Procession of the palms

Sana sannanina

Scripture text

South African melody

Xhosa text meaning Hosanna.

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1 For churches celebrating Palm Sunday on 29 March 2015.
(After the procession the following order of worship can be used.)

Call to worship

L: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
C: Amen.
L: Grace to you and peace from God, the love at our beginning and without end, in our midst and with us.
C: Thanks be to God.

L: Jesus calls us to journey with him, to journey with him to a hill looking out across Jerusalem, to journey with him to dangerous and chaotic streets in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Egypt to journey with him to the crowded refugee camps.

Jesus calls us to weep with him, to weep with Rachel for the massacre of her children, to weep with those who mourn of the execution of Egyptian Christians in Libya, to weep with all the victims of war in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Egypt.

C: And Jesus calls us to hope when hoping seems hopeless, Jesus calls us to hope for new life where there is death, Jesus calls us to hope for resurrection in the midst of crucifixion, Jesus calls us to hope for peace in the turmoil of war.

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♪ Come, O Prince of Peace (stanza 1 and 2)

1. Come, O Prince of Peace, save your people from fear.
2. Come O Prince of Peace, purify and refine us.
   Help our leaders rule in peace and grant your favour to us.

1. Komm, o Friedensfürst, nimm unsre Furcht, unsre Angste.
2. Komm, o Friedensfürst, lütere uns, mach uns besser.

1. Principe de la Paix, libère nous de la peur.
2. Principe de Paz, refina y purifica nuestros gobiernos, oh Señor, cuenten con tu bendición.

2. Prince de la Paix, pardonne-nous, rend-nous meilleurs.
2. Prince de la Paix, accorde-nous le vrai bonheur.

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As we gather to worship God in this place, commemorating the entry of Lord Jesus to Jerusalem and his passion, let us remember and pray for our sisters and brothers in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Egypt. We lament the massacre of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in these tragic and absurd wars, where Christians and other vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities are specifically targeted; we lament with those persecuted because of their beliefs; we grieve with all those who are forcefully displaced from their homes and lands by those who perpetuate suspicion, hatred and terror against those different from them. We are here to pray for peace in those countries and in our world, to renew our hope in the Triune God, and to strengthen our commitment to strive for justice and peace. Jesus says, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily, and follow me”. (Luke 9:23)

Come, O Prince of Peace (stanza 3 and 4)

3. Come O Prince of Peace, o'er us exult with song.
   Let your peace guard your children so that justice rules.

4. Come O Prince of Peace, fill the hungry with good things.
   Rescue those who are oppressed save, O Lord, save us.

   Wach' in Frieden über uns, auf dass Recht und Wahrheit regieren.

4. Komm, o Friedensfürst, sättige alle, die hungern.
   Schenk' den Geknechteten Freiheit und rette uns Gott, rette uns.

3. Príncipe de Paz, trae a la tierra tu canto,
   que la justicia y la paz al mundo puedan cambiar.

4. Príncipe de Paz, colma a los pobres que sufren,
   libéranos de opresión y danos tu salvación.

(Please be seated.)

We ask for God's mercy

Jesus says, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Let us now bring our grief and sorrow to God, our refuge and strength.
O God, our God,
we see pain, suffering, and terror in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Egypt.
Towns and villages are torn apart
by war, oppression, injustice, and hunger.
Refugee camps are springing up,
and quickly fill to overflowing.
In this war, many religious and ethnic communities,
including our Christian sisters and brothers, who are small in number,
are in constant threat,
in danger of losing their lives and future,
in danger of leaving their ancestral lands
and accelerating the loss of the ancient cultural and religious diversity of the region.
Terror reigns,
human life seems worthless.

C: Why, O God?

L: People are crying:
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

C: God, our God, why have you forsaken us?

L: Why must there be death and destruction?
Why must there be bloodshed and suffering?

C: Why, O God?

Response:

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C: When will we ever learn, O God, our Creator?

L: When will we ever learn?

C: When will we ever learn?

L: When will we learn
that you created us for community,
to live together as sisters and brothers
in wholeness and peace?

C: When will we ever learn?

L: When will we learn
that we are your children,
members of one family,
the human family,
all made in your image?

C: When will we ever learn?

Response:
L: O God, our Redeemer and Sustainer, in the midst of the gunfire, the chemical warfare and the incendiary bombs, help us remember:
C: Help us remember your love.

L: Help us remember that you loved the world so much that you gave your only begotten Son, whose love was nearly overwhelmed by hate,
C: whose light was nearly extinguished by darkness,
L: whose life was nearly destroyed by death … But not quite….
For love vanquished hate,
C: life overcame death,
L: light overwhelmed darkness,
C: and we can live with hope.

Response:

L: Blessed be the Lord, whom has heard the sound of our pleading. The Lord is our strength and our shield; in the Lord our heart trusts. The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed, their shepherd who carries them for ever. (Psalm 28)
C: Blessed be the Lord!

(Please rise.)

✠ Adom
Adom

Language: Twi, Ghana

Unknown, Ghana


What grace, heavily grace! God's grace, poured out upon us. What grace, generous grace! We thank you, O God, for your loving grace!


Literal text: (Singing translation: Andrew Donaldson)

Oh Grâce! Whose Grace is it? Oh Grace! It is God's Grace.
...with which he has blessed us!...with which he has saved us!
...which he has given us for free!...with which he has transformed us!

Ó Graça! Qual graça? Graça, graça de Deus.
...com a qual ele nos abençoou!...com a qual ele nos salva!...que nos deu de graça!...que nos transforma!

Oh Gracia! Cual Gracia? Gracia, Gracia de Dios.
...que nos bendice!...por la cual nos salvó!...que nos fue dada de gracia!...que nos transforma!

(Please be seated.)

Prayer

L: God of truth and mercy,
you lifted up the afflicted,
and judged the wicked.
In the midst of war that terrorizes your people,
give us courage to name what is evil,
strong commitment to strive for justice and peace,
and compassion to help the victims.
While denying ourselves and taking our cross daily,
give us faith to follow Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.

C: Amen.

Scripture readings

First reading - Isaiah 50:4-9a

♪ O holy God (Psalm 85)
Que nuestro Dios creador
Gospel reading - Mark 14:1-15:47

Que nuestro Dios creador

Adagio

Que nuestro Dios creador

Y que a - ni - de en su pue - blo la paz

Sermon

(Please rise.)

Affirmation of justice and peace²

² You may replace it with a traditional affirmation of faith.
All: I believe in God,
who is love and who has given the earth to all people.
I believe in Jesus Christ,
who came to heal us,
and to free us from all forms of oppression,
whose suffering and death bring new life.
I believe in the Spirit of God,
who works in and through all who are turned towards the truth.
I believe in the community of faith,
which is called to be at the service of all people and God's creation.
I believe in God's promise to finally destroy the power of sin in us all,
and to establish the kingdom of justice and peace for all.

Men: I do not believe in the right of the strongest,
nor the force of arms, nor the power of oppression.

Women: I believe in human rights, in the solidarity of all people,
in the power of non-violence.

Men: I do not believe in racism, in the power that comes from wealth and privilege,
or in any established order that enslaves.

Women: I believe that all men and women are equally human,
that order based on violence and injustice is not order.

Men: I do not believe that war and hunger are inevitable and peace unattainable.

Women: I believe in beauty of simplicity, in love with open hands, in peace on earth.

All: I do not believe that suffering needs to be in vain, that death is the end,
that the disfigurement of the world is what God intended.
But I dare to believe, always and in spite of everything,
in God's power to transform and transfigure,
fulfilling the promise of a new heaven and a new earth
where justice and peace will flourish.

(Adapted from a creed from Indonesia.)

(Please be seated.)

Intercessions

L: God of our birth and all creation,
as you raised Jesus from death and gave new life,
help us to treasure all life and to work toward ending violence.
Give us courage to go where you go
and to stand with the people of Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt,
and wherever violence against humanity occurs.
Heal us of our lust for power.
Free us from assumption that only we hold the divine truth.
Grant hope and renewed strength to all who suffer from war,
from the brutality of the oppressors, and from terrorist threat,
as well as to those who are tortured in jails, kidnapped and abducted,
especially Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and
Metropolitan Boulous Yazigi, Father Paolo Dall'Oglio,
and others whom we cannot name.

♪
Moran ethra hama'lain

♫

L: God of strength,
as Mary wept at the cross of Jesus,
we also weep with the women in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt
who are subjected to unimaginable pain and suffering.
Families are torn apart:
Mothers have lost their children, wives their husbands, daughters their fathers.
and many women, in unjust situations,
or victims of rape,
outcast in despair and shame,
have to shoulder heavy burdens alone.
We pray that you will hold the women of Syria, Iraq, Libya and Egypt close to you.

♫

L: God of love and care,
as Jesus embraced little children before his death,
embrace the children of Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt with your loving and healing touch.
We pray that they may have a chance to dream of the future
and experience security and peace.
We pray that they may have an opportunity to enjoy the same rights as other children –
the right to be a child.
When they are scared and tremble in fear, O God, hold them tight in your embrace.
We pray for young men and women who consider joining terrorist groups,
enshrine their mind with your wisdom and their heart with your love,
so they may see your image in every person they encounter.
and that you desire peace not war, life for all and not deadly threat.

L: God of wisdom,
as Jesus experienced dreadful treatment from imperial authorities, we pray that you may help those in power and community leaders understand that violence cannot and will not end violence. Help the leaders of the international community to make decisions which promote life and peace on earth; let them seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly before you.

L: God of creation, as the earth shook at the death of Jesus, we pray for the environment that has been destroyed and plundered during war. We pray for the preservation and protection of the whole of creation.

L: God of mercy, as the criminal crucified with Jesus repented, we pray for the oppressors, the terrorists and those who spread terror and death, forgive them and enable us to forgive, even when we cannot justify their evil doings. Lead them in your way, the way of repentance, teach them your will that conveys love and compassion, justice and peace for all humans, despite differences that exist.

L: God of all nations, as Jesus came, died, and rose again to bring peace, we pray for your presence among the people of Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt and the people who live in the surrounding countries. Fill every heart with your love and mercy.
Challenge our understanding of justice and peace
and encourage us to act according to your Word.
Help us to end hatred and suffering in the world,
grant the whole world peace.

L: God of all times and places,
in Jesus Christ, lifted up on the cross,
You opened for us the path to eternal life.
We commend to your loving embrace our Christian sisters and brothers
who have died for the sake of your Son.
Comfort their grieving families.
Help us to remember them and their faith in Jesus Christ.
Give us such faith to follow our Lord,
walking in your holy ways.
May the Holy Spirit sustain us.

Lord’s prayer

Offering

(Please rise.)

Sending out

L: Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart,
and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary,
repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing.
(1Peter 3:8-9)

C: Thanks be to God.

♪ My peace I give unto you
Blessing

L: May the blessing of the God of peace and justice be with us; may the blessing of the Son who weeps the tears of the world’s suffering be with us; and may the blessing of the Spirit who inspires us to reconciliation and hope be with us from now into eternity.

C: Amen.

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(Congregants may pray or light a candle near the cross, while “Yarabb as salami,” “Salaman atruku lakom” and other peace songs being sung.)
Yarabba as salami

Send peace on our world, God, You, the creator of peace.
Du Gott des Friedens, giess dein den Frieden auf uns.
Toi Dieu de la paix envoie ta paix sur nous tous.
Tú, oh Dios de la paz, dá nos amor por tua paz.

Our hearts fill with peace, God. You are the source of healing peace.
Du Gott des Friedens, fille mi Frieden unser Herz.
Toi Dieu de la paix combles nos coeurs de ta paix.
Tú, oh Dios de la paz, en nuestras vidas siebra paz.

Salaman atruku lakom

A peace I leave to you,
my peace I give unto you,
not as the world gives
I do.